



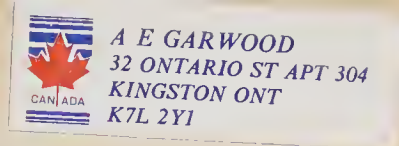




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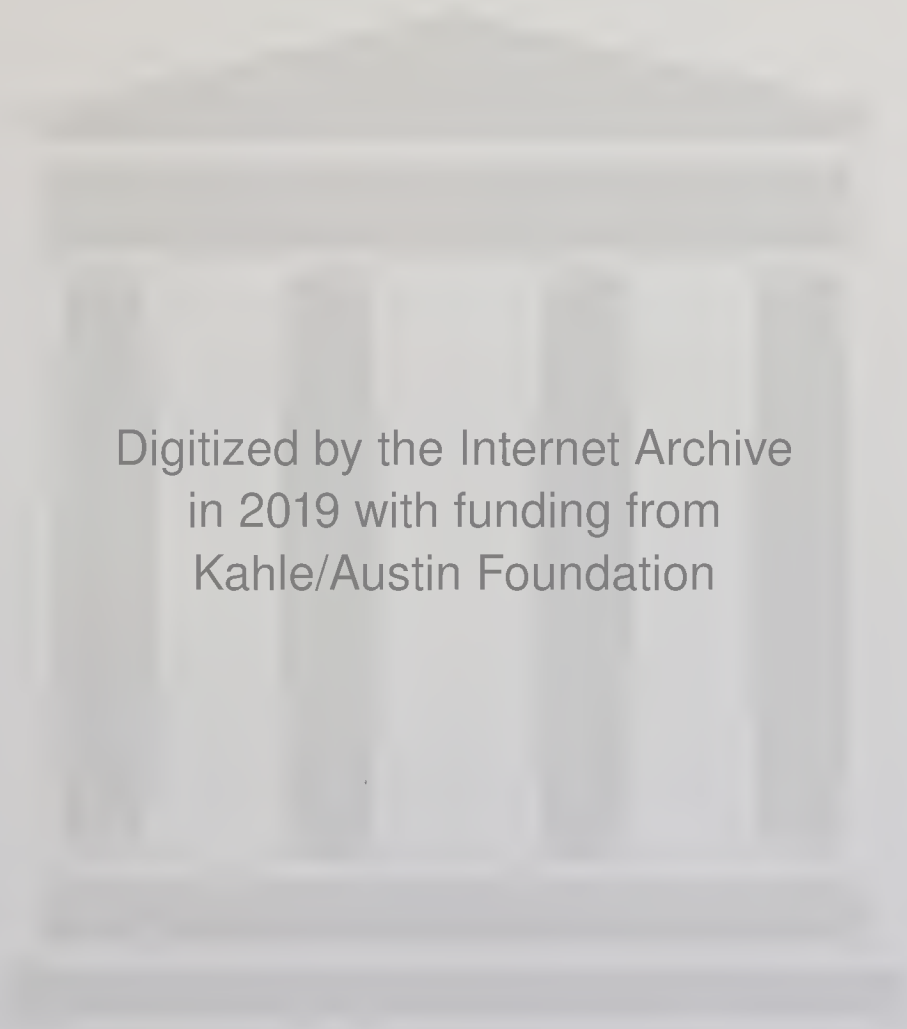
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THOMAS PAINE

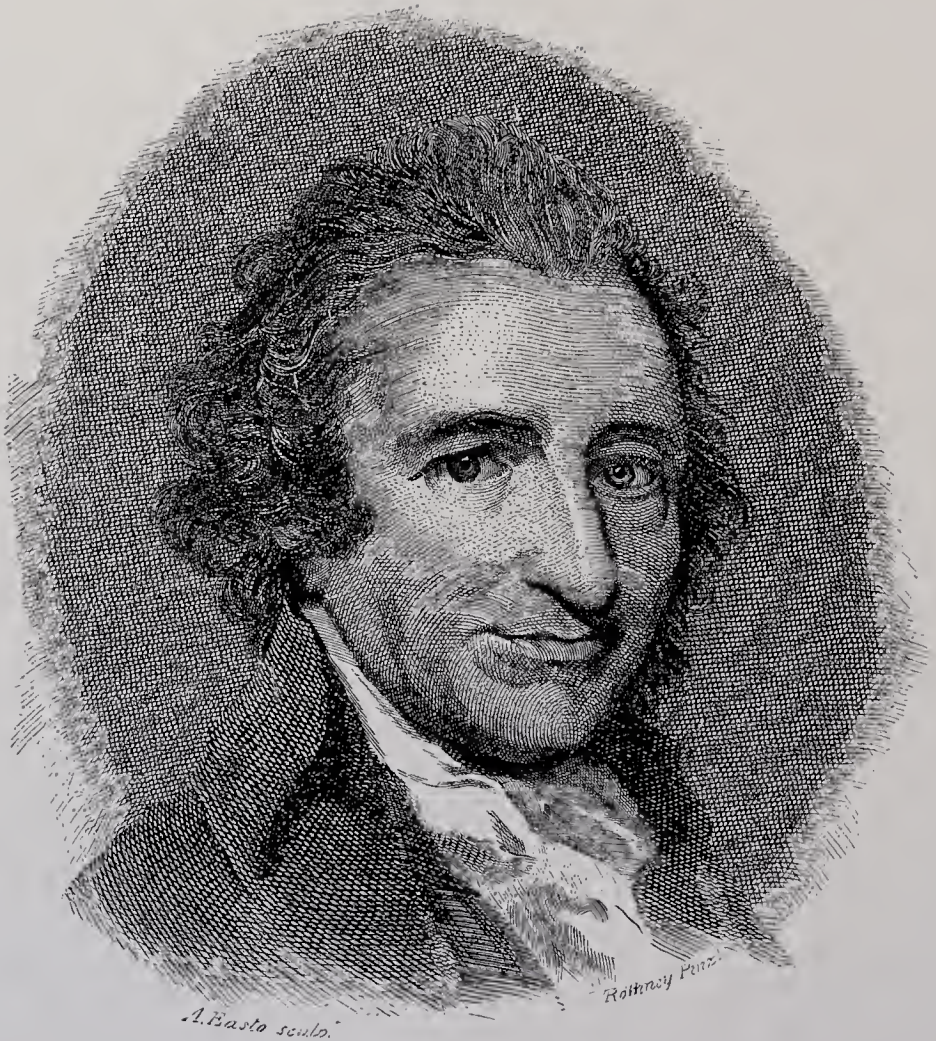




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THOMAS PAINE BY ROMNEY

“Why seek occasions, surly critics and detractors, to misrepresent Mr. Paine? He was mild, unoffending, sincere, gentle, humble and unassuming; his talents were soaring, acute, profound, extensive and original, and he possessed that charity which covers a multitude of sins.”—THOMAS CLIO RICKMAN.

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# THOMAS PAINE

Prophet and Martyr of  
Democracy

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By

MARY AGNES BEST

AUTHOR OF "REBEL SAINTS"



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## *Foreword*

**S**NATCHING laurels from brows that long have worn them has become a fad, like antique collecting. It is a diverting change to place a wreath on a head that for more than a century has been crowned with infamy. The centennial of Thomas Paine's death was fittingly observed in London, the city in which he was tried for treason and convicted. Thetford, his birthplace, where he was prohibited from holding meetings, celebrated the event with a banquet at which the mayor presided and made the sort of speech which mayors make on such occasions: our distinguished townsman, who shed luster, and so on. When men have been reviled by their own generation and honored by those following, it is customary to make the witless comment that they lived before their time. On the contrary, it is these robust personalities who launched new freedoms on the stream of time.

A life of Thomas Paine is a history of his age; he was an actor in the great dramas of his time. His "affectionate friend," Thomas Jefferson, declared that he deserved the thankfulness of nations. None has been so backward in contributing its meed of thankfulness as the nation which he helped to make, to which he gave the fullest measure of his devotion, and was the first to name The United States of America. While Colonial leaders floundered about in futilities, the unknown Englishman grasped the economic, social, and political significance of the American revolt, and like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, hurled his prophecy of America's destiny.

Paine dismissed the past too lightly, but he anchored in the future; "Mr. Paine's wild theories" are less wild today than when he advanced them. Since his *Common Sense* stirred this country to its remotest hamlet, one hundred and fifty years ago, his writings have had a steady sale. How many millions of his books have been circulated it would be difficult to reckon, and impossible to estimate their influence in changing the thought of men. It is claimed that from five to ten thousand copies are printed annually in New York City alone. The recent ten-volume Patriots' Edition, edited by W. M. Van der Weyde, has already sold upward of seven thousand sets.

To Moncure Conway, a Unitarian clergyman, belongs the credit of rehabilitating Paine. His exhaustive research in the archives of England and France brought to light valuable documents, long buried. His *Life of Paine* is frankly partisan; it is a question whether any historical writer is impartial. Poring over dusty records is weary work; who would undertake it unless prodded on by some sort of bias? All that a reader may reasonably demand is that there shall be no juggling with the truth. But as Pontius Pilate pertinently inquired: What is truth? It is as difficult to snare a *fact* as to shake salt on a bird's tail. Even when it is snared and caged, some insist that it is a crow, others that it is an eagle. Public men should be allowed to speak for themselves, and their utterances should be checked up by their actions. As to accuracy, it is relative, extremely so; John Adams and Thomas Jefferson differed about the date and details of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Paine had a hard, practical head; his heart led him a merry chase. If he had not been a great human-

itarian, he might have been one of the great inventors of his age; Thomas A. Edison has paid high tribute to his inventive genius. When Robert Fulton was playing marbles, Paine's mind was turning over the problem of steam power. In later years Fulton consulted him and recognized him as a pioneer in the field. The American Revolution relegated that subject to the garret of his mind. He did find time to invent the planing machine, and after the Revolution he settled down to develop his very original ideas on bridge building. He took his bridge models to Europe, and won the approval of the French and English Academies.

While his bridge was the talk of the engineering fraternity, the French Revolution flamed up, and Paine always dropped everything and speeded to revolutions, like a boy running to a fire. His *Rights of Man*, written in defense of the French Revolution, for which he was outlawed in England, James Madison declared to be an exposition of the principles on which the United States was founded.

Those who sneered at his ignorance claimed in the same breath that he got his ideas from the philosophers. Ideas do not come in hermetically sealed packages; they are fluid, and have a tendency to seep. Scholars read what scholars wrote; Paine translated the most advanced thought of his time into the vernacular: "I bring reason to your ears, and in language as plain as A B C." No man before or since his time has so successfully conducted the A B C class.

Facing the guillotine, he wrote *The Age of Reason* to check the drift toward atheism, to inculcate a reverence for the Creator, and a love for the creature. Dogmatists



have defamed him; atheists and freethinkers have honored him.

Paine never straddled fences; he took them like a hunter, and kept on his own side the fence, however unpleasant he found it, though beckoned with bribes from the other side. In his own words, he fought valiantly, "in short, for the promotion of everything that can benefit the moral, civil and political condition of man."

M. A. B.

Acknowledgment is made to the Newark Public Library, the New York Public Library, the New York Historical Society, the Congressional Library, and the Print Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Librarians deserve to be extolled in song and story. In no institution in the world does one meet with such intelligent, efficient, and unfailingly courteous attention as in the Congressional Library in Washington.

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THOMAS PAINE



## Chapter I

### A REBEL IN THE MAKING

Important as were some of Paine's mechanical inventions, they seem to me of minor interest, when we consider *Common Sense* and Paine's planning of this great American republic, of which he may be justly considered the founder.—THOMAS A. EDISON.

CARLYLE commented plaintively on the fact that mankind live apathetically in a world of wonders and miracles. National pride insists that historical characters appear always in purple and ermine as they move through the dull fiction known as history. The truth, or an honest effort to approximate it, is infinitely more romantic than fiction, and incidentally very instructive. "As soon as history is properly told," said Whitman, "there is no more need for romance." A penniless corset-maker on the edge of middle age emigrates in search of a job and becomes the instrument for wresting a great continental possession from a mighty empire. It is an adventure more exciting than the wildest fiction, and a corner stone of American history which the majority of Americans know nothing about.

Ask the average man what he knows of this great patriot, honored by Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, and Madison for his devotion to the cause of independence, and in complete ignorance of fact he will almost invariably reply: "Only that he was an infidel." Admired and



esteemed by our first great presidents, Thomas Paine has in our day been characterized by Theodore Roosevelt as a "filthy little atheist." More misinformation could not be crowded into three words. Paine was five feet ten, several inches taller than our strenuous twenty-sixth president; distinguished friends on both sides the water testified that, far from being filthy, he was rather elegant in dress and manner; and he himself declared that he was still further from atheism.

In the year 1776 in the City of Brotherly Love the American Republic was brought forth in travail; the birth certificate was drawn up and attested on the second day of July. A century and a half has rolled into history since that fateful day; yet the smoke-screen which darkens the character of the most ardent patriot and one of the most conspicuous characters of the time has not been dispelled. But for the deliberate vilification of his character, Thomas Paine, for his unswerving zeal in pushing the colonies into the immortal Declaration, would have gone down in our annals as a revered founder of the nation.

The chapter which the eighteenth century added to history, illuminated in varied colors by George Washington and Napoleon Bonaparte, records no more romantic, spectacular, and turbulent career than that of Thomas Paine, who enjoyed the respect of both those great generals. The son of a Quaker father, an honest artisan, this man, the card catalogue of whose praise and vituperation fills two boxes in our national library, lived for thirty-seven years in impecunious obscurity. Then he arrested the shrewd observing eye of Benjamin Franklin, who looked upon him with favor and recommended Pennsylvania to him as a desirable place of residence, and him

to Pennsylvania as a desirable citizen. In the twinkling of an eye he emerged from obscurity into fame and stirred up a mighty commotion in two continents.

Sponsored by the influential colonial agent, like many millions since, he set out for the new world in search of a job—a blind man in the lead of destiny. Secure in his obscure insignificance, he little dreamed that his was the hand fated to throw a match into the gunpowder which resulted in the world-shaking explosion known as the Declaration of Independence, which presently turned the governments of the world topsy-turvy. Within a decade the penniless adventurer had become the prophet of the dissatisfied throughout the world. Elated by the part he had played in the creation of a new nation, he carried the revolutionary torch lighted in America to England and France, and remained throughout his life an object of veneration or detestation to his fellows, but, judging by hundreds of books and pamphlets, never of indifference.

Comparatively little is known of the uneventful humdrum of this man's early life; it belongs among the short and simple annals of the poor. By the time he had become of such importance that the most powerful government in the world paid a scribe to write a derogatory biography, all his personal interests had been submerged in the great international revolution. His present was of far more absorbing interest than his past; he had neither time nor inclination for early reminiscences or for more than a passing jibe at his detractors.

Yet among those short and simple annals of his early life may be gleaned apparently trifling details of profound significance in shaping his destiny, details which

were part of the raw material for the making of history. In a world of wonders and terrors this man was never apathetic.

It is claimed by psychoanalysts that the causes of physical disturbances may be come at by probing for spiritual wounds. The probing process has not yet been applied to history to discover the relation of wounded personalities to the disturbances of the body politic.

Joseph Paine, father of Thomas, is described by George Chalmers, alias Francis Oldys, the subsidized detractor of the son, as "a reputable citizen and *though poor*, an honest man." Considering Chalmers' intimate knowledge of venality in high places the poverty qualification is somewhat amusing. Paine senior, a quiet unassuming Quaker of Norfolkshire farming stock, tilled his bit of land and eked out a meager living by following the trade of stay-maker.

In 1734 he married Frances Cocke, eleven years his senior, "a woman of sour temper and an eccentric character," according to the same authority. This dour lady was a member of the established church, and a peg higher in the social scale than her young husband. It is a likely guess that thirty-seven years of spinsterhood was a determining factor in her acceptance of a young man belonging to the Society of Friends, commonly and derisively known as Quakers, a sect which had but recently filled the jails of Great Britain and Ireland to overflow and furnished passengers to the convict ships and slaves to the West Indies. Considering the temper of the lady and the religious animosities of her time, it is a fair assumption that the ways of religion in that household were not all ways of pleasantness, nor all its paths peace.

On January 29, 1737, Thomas Paine was born to this strangely mated pair, eight years after the death of the most famous of the Quaker sect, William Penn, in whose province he was to find himself and his mission. He was confirmed in the state church, owing, says his hostile biographer, "to the orthodox zeal of Mistress Cocke," his mother's sister. We know enough of the vehemence of orthodox zeal at that period to warrant the surmise that Paine in his impressionable childhood became familiar with the intolerance and dedecorous behavior of implacable piety. An incident of his childhood was so vividly imprinted on his mind that he recalled it when in later life he wrote *The Age of Reason*.

"I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation of mine, who was a great devotee of the church, upon the subject of what is called Redemption by the death of the Son of God. After the sermon was ended I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and I thought to myself that it was making Almighty God act like a passionate man that killed his son; . . . and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons. . . . I believed that God was too good to do such an action, and also too almighty to be under the necessity of doing it. I believe in the same manner to this moment: and I moreover believe that any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system."

This *révolté* of seven refused to believe ill of his Creator and, unlike the ordinary child, was not at all shocked



by his own temerity in being shocked. He brushed aside accepted tradition with fine unconcern; already he was a rebel in the making. Even in realms of bliss pious Aunt Cocke would have been very much upset to learn that her zeal had laid the foundations for *The Age of Reason*.

In his thirteenth year Paine was taken from school to follow his father's trade, and academic writers have insisted that he was therefore an ignorant man. An astonishing number of men even more "ignorant" have made considerable dents on their time. Paine learned more out of school than the majority learn in it; he had an insatiable curiosity about "all things visible or audible" and a voracious appetite for knowledge. This appetite he gratified at the expense of the physical. To satisfy it he put himself in the way of the best possible means of education, contact with men of culture and wisdom. From the wisdom of such men books are made, though books do not always make for wisdom.

"My parents," wrote Paine, "were not able to give me a shilling beyond what they gave me in education; and to do this they distressed themselves. My father being of the Quaker profession, it was my good fortune to have an exceedingly good moral education, and a tolerable stock of useful learning. Though I went to grammar school . . . I did not learn Latin, not only because I had no inclination to learn languages, but because of the objection the Quakers have against the books in which that language is taught. But this did not prevent me from being acquainted with the subjects of all the Latin books used in the school. The natural bent of my mind was to science. I had some turn, and I believe some talent,

for poetry, but this I rather repressed than encouraged, as leading too much into the field of imagination."

Devout Quakers discouraged the propensity to stray, and Paine indulged "in a curious conceit." If they had been consulted at the creation, what a drab world they would have made, flowers without color and birds without song!

His natural inclination toward scientific study made it easy to give up many things which are generally regarded, especially in youth, as indispensable necessities of life. He attended the lectures of eminent scientists, and in the mental stimulus of association with gifted men found compensation for material deprivations. He appears to have been none the worse physically by reason of his meager fare.

Unconsciously he was storing up impressions of all that went on about him, an indirect education which was to have an important influence on the direction of his energy later on. Daily on his way to school he passed the prison and heard the cries that came from the tortured or the condemned. Nearly two hundred crimes were deemed in law deserving of capital punishment, many of them trivial offenses against property. Hungry children were hanged for stealing food, and men for snaring a wild rabbit. As late as 1818 Cruikshank startled England by a drawing of two women he had seen dangling from the gallows for the passing of a bad pound note. Incidentally it may be noted that the English government which hanged them resorted to the counterfeiting of both American and French money as a means of crippling the revolutions in those two countries.

From his earliest years Paine viewed by his own inner



flashlight, rather than by the light of custom and tradition, all that passed before his piercing eyes. An uneducated man by the standards of academic conceit, he drew instruction from his environment as plants select certain elements from the soil. The "exceedingly good moral education" provided by his Quaker father instilled a sense of the sacredness of human life. Man made in the image and likeness of God, the shrine of a divine spark, was of more value than a pound note or a wild rabbit. A child who at the age of seven rejected the doctrine of divine cruelty would be easily weaned at the age of thirteen from allegiance to an earthly power whose legal atrocities were all too obvious.

Nor could the vindictive temper of the church of which Aunt Cocke was a devotee have failed to impress that receptive young mind. Clerical reprisals on heretics or dissenters were recorded with endless detail in the Quaker *Book of Sufferings*, with which he was no doubt familiar. Churchmen themselves were becoming restless even under the milder manifestations of the church's ruthlessness. The *Sufferings* gives some idea of the idiosyncrasies of orthodoxy in the good old days. The daughter of a clergyman, to the great disgust of her family, turned Quaker. Preparing for Meeting one Sabbath morning, the girl discovered a rip in her dress and tidily mended it, for as all days were the Lord's days the Quakers made no fetish of the first. This scandalous desecration of the holy day was duly reported to the good rector before he set off to feed his flock. The priest took counsel with his son the magistrate, and the worthy pair soon had the prodigal daughter in the stocks. Through a downpour of rain she remained in this cruel bondage, exposed to the gaze of

all beholders, her family deriding her on their way to church. Others wending toward the sanctuary, so the narrative says, were moved to tears by her suffering and humiliation, and openly and unfavorably commented on the severity of their spiritual guide.

Schoolmaster Knowles contributed in all innocence to his pupil's education. This gentleman had been chaplain on a man-o'-war, and for the glorification of himself and the edification of an eager boy, he relived his martial life. A Quaker father had ineffaceably stamped his principles on the mind of his son, but Thomas was what the Scotch call "a stirring lad"; and those doughty pacifist fighters, the Quakers, once their revolutionary course was run, had settled into a quietism which afforded no outlet for his restless energy. Chalmers, who was commissioned to blacken his character, relates: "Such was his enterprise on the water, and his intrepidity on the ice, that he became known by the appellation of Commodore." His sour-tempered mother could hardly have made the home an enjoyable place, and corset-making, to one of his age and bent, must have been a distasteful employment. The trickling away of youthful energy and enthusiasm is the most tragic waste in a wasteful world.

For three years the boy pegged away at corset-making in the uneventful little town of Thetford, and then decided to make a break for the wide world of romance so colorfully pictured by Master Knowles. "At an early period, little more than sixteen years of age, raw and adventurous and heated with the false heroism of a master who had served on board a man-o'-war, I became the carver of my own fortune, and entered on board the *Terrible*, Captain Death. From this adventure I was

happily prevented by the affectionate and moral remonstrance of a good father, who, from his own habits of life, being of the Quaker profession, must have begun to look upon me as lost."

A happy escape indeed, for on his next putting out to sea in the *Terrible*, Captain Death met a fate in keeping with this extraordinary nomenclature, which might have been cribbed from a pirate tale of the Spanish Main: most of his crew were killed outright; only a few of the wounded survived. The *Terrible*, Paine tells us, "stood the hottest engagement of any ship during the war with France."

But Thomas was a headstrong youth who found life in Thetford endlessly dull. The moral suasion of an affectionate pacifist parent proved unavailing against the urge for romantic adventure and the boredom of ladies' garment-making. On the declaration of war with France the lad enlisted on the privateer *King of Prussia* and got off to sea. He apparently never lifted the curtain on this experience, but one thing is certain; the romantic idea of war was speedily consigned to the discard along with other long-cherished traditions. The groans of mutilated warriors were not a bit more romantic than the shrieks of condemned prisoners. The price of glory was ridiculously high and was paid by those who got none of it.

The two years which followed after leaving the path of glory are unaccounted for; at the age of twenty the boy turned up in London and again settled down to the harmless if uncongenial work of stay-making. So far, at peace or in war, he had found the world barbaric rather than romantic; his thought now turned optimistically to other worlds: "As soon as I was able I purchased a pair

of globes, and attended the philosophical lectures of Martin and Ferguson, and afterwards became acquainted with Dr. Bevis of the . . . Royal Society, then living in the Temple, and an excellent astronomer." For two years corset-making paid for star-gazing, and again he moved on.

As a corset-maker, Paine was a square peg in a round hole. Uncongenial employment is a discipline to which the fates often subject the child of destiny. Grant's spirit chafed in his father's tannery; Abraham Lincoln measured off calico in a country store. It is true, as Lovelace says, that to the philosopher

Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for an heritage;  
If I have freedom in my love,  
And in my soul am free,  
Angels alone that soar above  
Enjoy such liberty.

The young are rarely philosophical; Paine's occupation was a cage, and he beat against the bars.

In his twenty-second year he ventured into matrimony and was married by the rector of St. Peter's in Sandwich, Kent, to Mary Lambert. Domestic satisfactions were not then or ever in the scheme marked out by a relentless fate; within the year his wife died in childbirth. Father-in-law Lambert was an exciseman, and like his contemporary Robert Burns, the youth now turned to that occupation as providing a livelihood while at the same time affording an opportunity for study and reflection. "I have seldom," he asserts, "passed five minutes of my life,



however circumstanced, in which I did not acquire some knowledge."

There was at least an element of adventure in the life of an excise officer, which was more than could be said for corset-making. The price of glory was met by heavy taxation which reduced the poor to the barest necessities of life. The boldest spirits found excitement and profit in evading the laws, and venturesome smugglers preferred fight to capture. The Volstead Act of the time, a tax of one pound on the gallon of spirits, was a tax per quart equal to the weekly wage of the poorest class. For the masses it was a prohibition law, and by all classes it was openly flouted. It is not difficult to guess where Paine's sympathies would lie as between decent and otherwise orderly neighbors and an extravagantly corrupt government which inflicted unreasonably brutal punishment, and whose high officials showed scant respect for either law or order. The feeling against the government was bitter, and Paine particularly had little respect for politicians: "I had no disposition for what is called politics. It presented to my mind no other idea than is contained in the word jockeyship." In bearing down lightly on the poor, he doubtless did right as God gave him to see the right, but on the whole he could hardly have been a satisfactory government servant, and he was dismissed from his post.

Somewhere about this time, between intermittent corset-making, revenue work, and star-gazing, an inner urge moved him in the direction of his true vocation—preaching. From the churchly standard he had not been properly trained to expound the teachings of the carpenter's son of Galilee, and the Bishop of London refused him a lay

preacher's certificate. Without the Bishop's blessing, it is said, he drew audiences in Moorsfield. For to this end—preaching—Paine came into the world. His message, whether religious or political, was disquieting to the standpatters; he crashed through all opposition, and with no pecuniary profit to himself delivered it with zeal and sincerity.

Roosevelt used the big stick rather heavily on the man known to fame as the most notorious of infidels: "There are infidels and infidels; Paine belonged to the variety . . . that apparently esteems a bladder of dirty water as the proper weapon with which to assail Christianity. . . . He admitted the existence of an unknown God, but denied that there was a God of the Christians." Mr. Roosevelt's zeal carried him beyond his depth; a man who admits the existence of any God cannot be termed an atheist, even though he deny, as Paine most vehemently did, the existence of a God of the Christians, the Mohammedans, the Jews, or any other national, tribal, or sectarian deity. He reiterated his belief in an almighty power which makes the sun to shine on the just and the unjust, and he ordered all his ways in conformity with that belief. Moreover, it was not Christianity but its churchly excrescences which Paine assailed, and it was by his enemies that the bladders of dirty water were thrown.

In his thirtieth year Paine succeeded in getting himself reinstated as an excise officer, this time at Lewes. Here he lodged with one Samuel Ollive, by religious profession a Quaker, by temperament tolerant, by trade a tobacconist. Paine's life at Lewes, according to his Quaker friend Rickman, was hardly of a Quakerish hue:



“In this place he lived several years in habits of intimacy with a very respectable, sensible, and convivial set of acquaintances, who were entertained by his witty sallies and informed by his more serious conversation. In politics he was at this time a Whig, and notorious for that quality which has been defined as perseverance in a good cause and obstinacy in a bad one. He was tenacious of his opinions, which were bold, acute, and independent, and which he maintained with ardor, elegance, and argument.”

A pleasant group, the White Harts, among which to while away the long evenings in animated discussion: “The White Hart Club was the resort of a social and intelligent circle who, out of fun, seeing that disputes often ran warm and high, frequently had what they called *The Headstrong Book*. This was no other than an old Greek Homer which was sent the morning after a debate vehemently maintained to the most obstinate haranguer in the club: this book had the following title, as implying that Mr. Paine the best deserved and the most frequently obtained it:

“*The Headstrong Book; or Original Book of Obstinacy.*  
Written by . . . Lewes, in Sussex, and Revised and Corrected by *Thomas Paine*:

“Immortal Paine, while mighty reasoners jar,  
We crown thee General of the Headstrong War:  
Thy logic vanquished error, and thy mind  
No bounds but those of right and truth confined.  
Thy soul of fire must sure ascend the sky,  
Immortal Paine, thy fame can never die;  
For men like thee their names must ever save  
From the black edict of the tyrant grave.’”

Time has turned many a jester into a prophet. "My friend Mr. Lee of Lewes," writes Rickman, "in communicating this to me in . . . 1810 [shortly after Paine's death] said: 'This was manufactured nearly forty years ago, as applicable to Mr. Paine, and I believe you will allow, however indifferent the manner, that I did not very erroneously anticipate his future celebrity.'" In the spirited little circle of the White Harts, Paine seems to have been a dominant personality.

He had been a widower for twelve years; now, in his thirty-fourth year, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Samuel Ollive, after the death of her father. With wife and mother-in-law he carried on the tobacconist business, in addition to performing his not very onerous duties as excise officer. After three years this marriage ended in a legal separation, giving rise to much indelicate and ribald gossip: "This I can assert," says Rickman, "that Mr. Paine always spoke tenderly and respectfully of his wife, and sent her several times pecuniary aid without her even knowing whence it came [the business had been legally settled upon her at the time of the separation]. . . . That he did not cohabit with her from the moment they left the altar till the day of their separation, is an indubitable truth. It is also true that no physical defect on the part of Mr. Paine can be adduced as a reason for such conduct." Rickman's curiosity got the better of him, and on one occasion he took the liberty of an intimate to broach the subject. He got no enlightenment: "It is nobody's business but my own," he was told; "I had cause for it, but I will name it to no one." Paine was expansive except in the matter of his intimate concerns: "I never

answer impertinent questions," was his short rejoinder when directly questioned concerning them.<sup>1</sup>

An equally dignified reticence on the part of Mrs. Paine gave to her neighbors the diversion of conjecture. The most plausible surmise is that she may have held with the tenets of a group which entertained peculiarly ascetic views. At any rate, the pair parted with mutual respect and good will. In her old age, when, after the publication of *The Age of Reason*, invective against the author ran wild, Mrs. Paine invariably rose and left the room when her husband was vilified, although she was at that time affiliated with the strictest Calvinistic sect.

The year 1774 seemed to spell down and out for Thomas Paine; for the second time he was ousted from the excise; his effects were sold for debt; he lost his wife and home. This was his last attempt at domestic life. He had been an active agitator for a living wage for the excisemen, had petitioned both houses of Parliament, and published a pamphlet—*Thoughts on the Corruption Arising from the Poverty of Excise Officers*. In this crusade he succeeded in enlisting the interest of Oliver Goldsmith, though he got no response from either branch of the legislature. Officials of the government were much too preoccupied with securing stategraft to give much attention to the petty graft of the excisemen. Evidently Paine put more ardor into his effort to clean up his department by securing a decent living for his fellow workers than in apprehending poor smugglers for slight

<sup>1</sup> This matter is referred to in a recent life of George Washington: "There was a mystery in Paine's life which it would be interesting to explore if we had time." Without further exploration, the author, in a spirit of divination apparently, asserts on the same page: "Destitution, aggressiveness, intellect, *sexual impotence*, loneliness and sensitiveness went into the composition of this rebel."

infractions of a law which the privileged class violated with impunity. Smugglers of a bit of tobacco or a drop of spirits got short shrift and long leisure in which to repent in jail, while Admiral Duncan, the Honorable Henry Dundas and the Right Honorable William Pitt, it was claimed, not only smuggled for their own use, but threatened with dismissal excisemen who became too inquisitive. Rickman admits that as smuggling was the practice of lords and ladies, ministers of the government, magistrates, and laborers, Paine, too, may have taken a turn at evading the revenue law.

On the other hand, the cause of his dismissal was never aired, and it has been assumed that men in high places may have had good reasons for keeping it dark. Years later, when Paine had become a thorn in the side of the British government, when his meetings were broken up and owners of buildings were threatened for harboring him or his friends, he wrote protesting to the sheriff of Lewes, reminding him that he had formerly been a resident of that town:

“My situation among you as an officer of the revenue, for more than six years, enabled me to see the numerous and various distresses which the weight of taxes even at that time of day occasioned: and feeling as I then did, and as it is natural for me to do, for the hard condition of others, it is with pleasure I can now declare, and every person then under my survey, and now living, can witness the exceeding candor, and even tenderness, with which that part of my duty that fell to my share was executed. The name of Thomas Paine is not to be found in the records of the Lewes justices, in any act of contention with, or severity of any kind whatever towards, the per-

sons he surveyed. . . . Many of you will recollect that while I resided among you there was not a man more firm and open in support of the principles of liberty than myself, and I still pursue, and ever will, the same path."

This portrait of himself as a revenue officer does not suggest excessive ardor in filling the coffers of the king with the mites of the poor by an inelastic application of the law. Tenderness was a crime rather than a virtue in the eyes of his superiors; the government was out for revenue, not for reform.

A somewhat perfunctory performance of official duty had left Paine with time and energy to devote to mathematics, astronomy, and the investigation of natural phenomena. These studies were more vitally interesting than heckling men intent on alleviating a hard lot by a surreptitious glass of spirits or a pipeful of soothing tobacco. He was searching for God, he claimed, in the universal laws of His creation. Books, however sacred, might lie, but nature was a perpetual, inexhaustible, and infallible revelation of an almighty power. An old and broken man, facing death in a French prison, he quoted from memory Addison's great hymn:

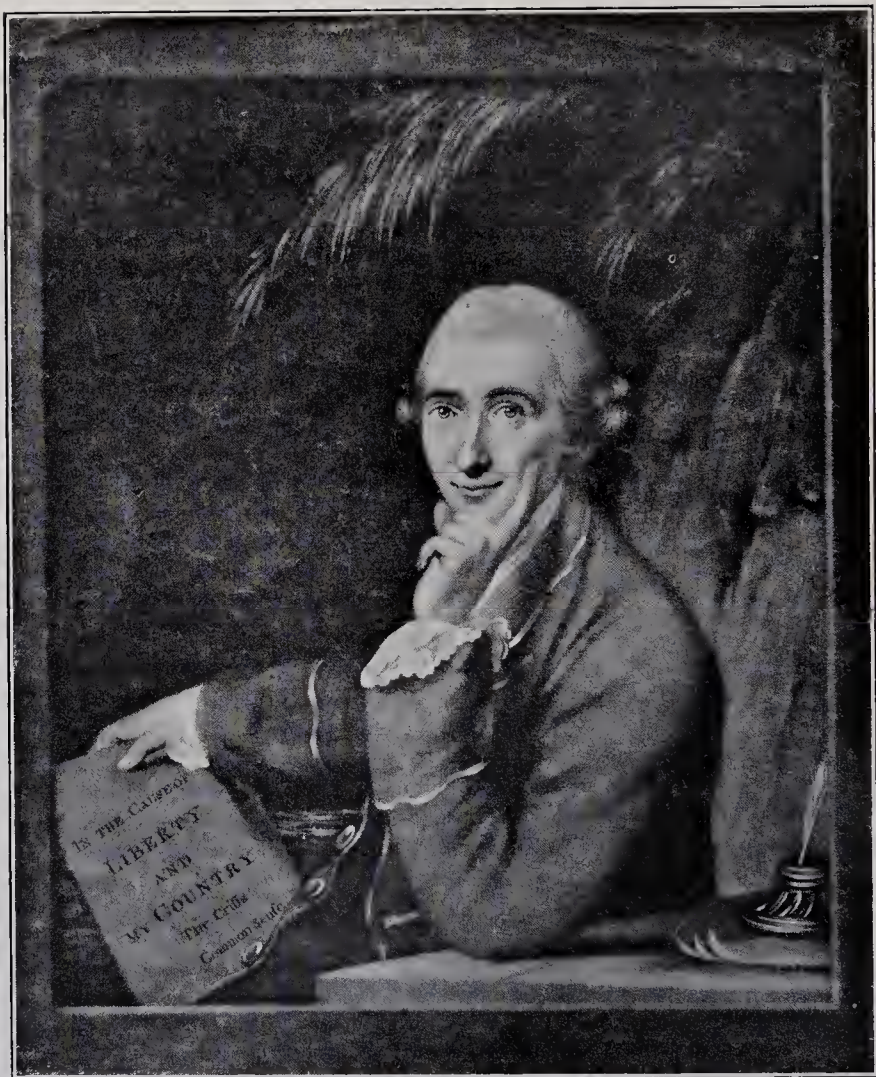
The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue ethereal sky,  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their great original proclaim.  
The unwearied sun from day to day  
Does his creator's power display,  
And publishes to every land  
The work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,  
And nightly to the listening earth  
Repeats the story of her birth.









PORTRAIT OF THE AMERICAN PATRIOT

Thomas Paine, painted for his friend Henry Laurens, President of the Continental Congress.

While all the stars that round her burn,  
And all the planets in their turn,  
Confirm the story as they roll  
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all  
Move round the dark terrestrial ball;  
What though no real voice or sound  
Amid their radiant orbs be found?  
In reason's ear they all rejoice  
And utter forth a glorious voice,  
Forever singing as they shine:  
The hand that made us is divine.

In a spirit profoundly religious, with an ardor which tax-collecting could never evoke, Paine became a reverent student of "the work of an almighty hand." Following this path, he made acquaintance with scholars and scientists, and eventually it led him into friendship with that perpetual scholar and amateur scientist, Benjamin Franklin. This friendship, based on mutual interests, brought him into personal relations with all the great makers of history in the eighteenth century.

Franklin had now passed the meridian of a life which was to end in a brilliant sunset. As the accredited agent of the colonists, he had made futile attempts to present their grievances to the king. At the time of his meeting with Paine he was under a heavy cloud, ignored in his official character, and treated with studied insolence by as stupidly high-handed a government as ever bungled the affairs of a nation. It is quite probable that had the colonial agent been accorded the consideration to which his character and mission entitled him, he would have had less leisure to indulge his philosophical and scientific tastes; Paine might never have crossed his path, and that

firebrand of the eighteenth century might have remained in obscurity instead of emigrating to incite the colonists, block the onward march of empire, and vex the souls of its leaders.

As it happened, these two men had ample leisure to mount their hobbies, to discuss science, philosophy, the miseries of the poor, the insolence and corruption of the ruling class, and the character of the sovereign mischief-maker. Franklin was one of the many colonial leaders who, before the breaking out of hostilities, had regarded George III. respectfully, even affectionately, as "the best of kings." On a closer view of his liege lord his impressions were less favorable. Paine was able to enlighten him further; one of his numerous employers had been a tutor to the king, and his reminiscences of the princely youth exhibited him in a character very different from the one he enjoyed in the remote colonies.

On his own side the water it was an open scandal that the sovereign bribed in kingly fashion with money extracted from the pockets of the people. Throughout his dominions graft walked naked and unashamed in the broad light of day. Even the exiled Governor Hutchinson, so devout a king-lover that the sight of King George in his robes of state moved him to profound emotion, was inexpressibly shocked by governmental corruption. He would rather, his letters assert, die in the meanest farmhouse in Massachusetts than in the most stately palace in England. And the irate New Englanders had handled their unfortunate countryman without the velvet glove.

The English had little respect for their sovereign, and said so without circumlocution. The popular disgust would naturally be intensified in the Quaker democrat, a



witness to the humiliation by "the royal brute of Britain" of a man he esteemed so highly as Franklin. Paine was well on the road to forty when he fell in with the American agent, but the enthusiastic "soul of fire," and that piercing brilliance of eye which throughout his life attracted attention, must have kept him youthful in appearance; Franklin refers to him as a young man. A most desirable type of emigrant he considered him and said as much to his son-in-law, Richard Bache:

"The bearer, Mr. Thomas Paine, is very well recommended to me as an ingenious worthy young man. He goes to Pennsylvania with a view to settling there. I request you to give him your best advice and countenance, as he is quite a stranger there. If you can put him in the way of obtaining employment as a clerk, or assistant tutor in a school, so that he may procure subsistence at least, till he can make acquaintance and obtain knowledge of the country, you will do well, and much oblige your affectionate father." Pennsylvania was created to rid an English king of disturbing Quakers; Paine came to rid Pennsylvania of an English king.

Introducing Paine into the bosom of his family, Franklin's description of him does not tally with that furnished by enemies. Though Englishmen of the best type had recommended him to the American, the latent capacities of the ingenious worthy young man were as little suspected as the momentous sequel to Franklin's brief, friendly letter. As corset-maker, seaman, excise officer, tobacconist, grocer, or teacher, he had never yet fallen on his feet. These various occupations, followed in a half-hearted, indolent manner, had enabled him to exist. Fitted into his proper place, he was no longer indolent;

his sleepless, indefatigable energy was an astonishment, and contagious. The change was wrought by existence plus a purpose. Personal satisfaction in useful work well done, and the approval of his kind, were his sufficient reward.

We have two pen-pictures of Paine, so contradictory that one must be false. Rickman, trained in Quaker carefulness of speech, insists that in his long personal contact with him, he found Paine to be "a most abstemious sober man: his eye . . . full brilliant and singularly piercing: it had in it 'the muse of fire.' In dress and person generally very cleanly . . . wore his hair cued . . . powdered. He looked altogether like a gentleman of the old French school. His manners were very gracious . . . his conversation had fascination. . . . Among strangers he said little, and was no public speaker."

Leslie Stephen, in his *History of Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, writes: "One of Paine's biographers describes his first interview with the *old reprobate*. . . . He was constantly drunk, filthy beyond all powers of expression." Stephen fails to mention that this particular biographer, carefully concealed under the assumed name of Oldys and an equally assumed degree from the University of Pennsylvania, received a considerable sum of money to paint in the blackest colors the man whom a terrified government wished to discredit; and that his so-called biography has been refuted by more creditable and disinterested testimony, and indirectly by all the circumstances of Paine's life. Even by giving free play to his imagination, however, the writer failed to produce any damaging facts, and was obliged to fall back on

vituperation. It is a tax on credulity to suppose that a man of Franklin's prudence would have recommended such a character to the very decorous citizens of Philadelphia.

Stephen continues: "A man of vast ignorance, but possessed of mother wit and shrewdness," adding later on: "Wesley from the one side and *Tom* Paine from another forced more serious thoughts upon the age." Vast ignorance may be predicated of all mankind; the wisest are ever the readiest to admit it. As Paine comes in contrast with his contemporaries, with the rulers of that nation which assumes to be the greatest governing power since the fall of Rome, there is a temptation to believe that mother wit and shrewdness, coupled with integrity, are likely to prove more serviceable in a crisis than vast knowledge.

Stephen carries his disapprobation to the extreme of puerility by calling Paine "Tom," explaining that "good Englishmen expressed their disgust for the irreverent infidel by calling him Tom, and the name still warns all men that its proprietor does not deserve even posthumous civility." To the simple mind the paradoxical statements of this learned historian are somewhat bewildering. It is not made evident why a man who, it is admitted, seriously influenced the thought of a corrupt age, and who could not be overlooked in a history of the thought of his century, should be reviled as "an old reprobate," "an irreverent infidel," and exhibited to posterity as an object of disgust. Another illustrious detractor of Paine was popularly known as "Teddy," though presumably not in token of disgust or warning. Literature has been graced

by many lofty sentences less meaty with mother wit and wisdom than Artemus Ward's: "I had rather not to know anything than to know so many things that ain't so."

Paine was now leaving the land of his birth and many unsuccesses, with little in his pocket but Franklin's letter of good will. It is necessary to a proper understanding of his subsequent career to take a glance at the social conditions on which for a time he turned his back.

The reign of George III. was government by bribery pure and simple. Simple in the sinister meaning of the word his critics acknowledged it to be, and his Majesty himself asserted that in his generous bribery he was actuated by a pure attachment to his country, an end which justified any means. An eminent statesman defending the king's practical patriotism in the council house of the nation piously declared: "It is allowable and perfectly justifiable to use every means *which God has put into our hands.*" Money is still a high power in the world of politics, but the candid politician who should publicly proclaim it as a heaven-sent gift would now recuperate in a sanitarium. Time has changed the technique if not the nature of politicians.

The English people suspected that the hard cash which the "patriot king" used in bribing legislators to defeat their will came not from above but from the depths of their own pockets. They demanded an accounting of the civil list, which was refused by the government on the score of "delicacy." Hungry officials of church and state eagerly watched for the crumbs that fell from the king's table. Paine declared that the English were still in the bondage of feudalism, though "there is no body of men



more jealous of their privileges than the Commons, because they sell them."

Stategraft was a system, or rather a national disease; even men who have a claim to the respect of posterity were to some extent infected by the prevalent distemper. Paine records a conversation at the Duke of Portland's, where, after the peace with America, he dined with the great Edmund Burke. Owing to the king's "delicacy," Burke was at that time enjoying a pension from the civil list under an assumed name. He exhibited some curiosity as to the degree of favor with which Americans regarded his royal benefactor, their late sovereign. Paine answered with a tale of a tavern which in the old days of colonial loyalty had displayed the sign of the king's head. In the readjustments following the colonial victory, it was the intention of the innkeeper to advertise his hostel instead with the placid physiognomy of General Washington, but finding no craftsmen to make the substitution, the thrifty boniface merely appended an inscription under his Majesty's features: "This is the sign of the Loggerhead," and let it go at that. According to Paine, "Burke replied peevishly, 'Loggerhead or any other head, he has many good things to give away, and I should be glad of some of them.'" All things considered, it is not strange that a man like Paine should develop an extravagant antagonism to the power of the throne. A king animated by the purest patriotism, however, cannot bribe a whole nation, to paraphrase Burke's epigram; cash and sinecures sooner or later give out. The majority, who got nothing but the privilege of providing the sinews of bribery, were decidedly lacking in patriotic ardor; all the people murmured.

The king's irritation with his American subjects was greatly increased by the discovery that the ringleaders were not purchasable. We gather from Governor Hutchinson's letters that when that well-intentioned but misleading adviser assured his Majesty that Sam Adams and John Hancock were the sole disturbers of his peace in the Massachusetts colony, particularly the former, the king in astonishment queried: "Why has he not been bought off?" Hutchinson, who sincerely detested Adams, replied sorrowfully that the man was of such "obstinate opinions" that no amount of money would tempt him. Such being his odious disposition, it was decided to tie a rope around Adams' neck at such time as the royal pardon should be graciously extended to the repentant rebels.

Samuel's kinsman John of the same name was also offensively obstinate and made an unpleasant impression on General Burgoyne, who warned Lord Dartmouth: "Be assured, my Lord, this man soars too high to be allured by any offer Great Britain can make." John's name was therefore added to the list of those destined for elevation to the scaffold. From time to time that ascent seemed not very remote, and John Adams had some uneasy moments.

As for the English people, they gave no visible sign of being disposed to accept the state of affairs as inevitable or permanent. The rustle of a movement toward change was distinctly audible to the royal ear, and fear aggravated the royal obstinacy. Obstructions which would not yield to gold must be attacked with steel, and force was a purchasable commodity. To all the kingly stupidities, statesmen of vast knowledge and a deficiency of mother wit and shrewdness said yea and amen.

In that kingdom across the Channel over which George III. so modestly assumed sovereignty, conditions were worse than in Great Britain. The bitter and terrible goadings of government had been taken more for granted in France, but there, too, were portentous signs little heeded by the knowledgeable. In 1751, following the Austrian War, the hideous misery of the masses broke out in riots all over France: "Nothing but a revolution is talked of," wrote d'Argenson, "on account of the condition of the government."

Five years later the disastrous Seven Years' War brought a further increase of taxation, which the nobles and clergy shifted from their own shoulders to those already staggering under their burdens. Such inroads were made on the bare subsistence of the masses that in sheer desperation the *parlements* of Rouen and other cities refused to register the royal edicts imposing new levies. Humbly they begged for a national *parlement*, and were informed by the king: "I am your master. I ought to punish you for your impudence. Go back to Rouen; register my decrees and declaration without further delay. I will be obeyed."

Another seven years went by, and once more Rouen appealed to the master: "Your people, Sire, are unhappy. A deluge of taxes pitilessly ravages our towns and provinces." In the haughty spirit that goes before destruction, the royal egotist replied: "It is in my person alone that the sovereign power exists; it is from me alone that *my courts* have their existence and authority; it is to me alone that independent and indivisible legislative power belongs; public order emanates entirely from me." The public order which emanated from this august personage

and the courts of which he was the sole proprietor was an order of abject and appalling slavery. It was the scandalous corruption and brutality of the French courts which fomented the national discontent, resulting finally in the great eruption. Men were tried in secret, and without legal aid. The most abominable punishments were inflicted—"the pincers . . . melted lead poured into the wounds, the wheel, and the furnace." By such machinery His Most Christian Majesty achieved what he was pleased to call public order.

The privileged few who regarded themselves as the proprietors of the many were infuriated to extremes of cruelty by the slightest questioning of their proprietary rights. Even sympathy with the trampled masses they regarded as a crime. The tender-hearted Count Vorontsov unburdened himself freely in conversation with Gouverneur Morris, assuring him that "though bred a military man, and obliged sometimes to order punishments, he could never behold an execution, his nature recoiling from the view of human misery, *but yet* if Lafayette and the Duke of Orleans were to be broken on the wheel . . . and he had no means of seeing it done but by going thither on foot (a considerable distance), he would set out immediately." All things considered, the atrocities of the French Revolution seem to have been hardly tit for tat.

Such were the conditions in the two most advanced European countries under their respective autocrats, George and Louis, who invariably and quite accurately referred to the inhabitants as "my subjects." The lesser rulers of the Continent were like unto them. Three years before Thomas Paine emigrated to America looking for



a job, the French were again rioting for bread; Paris was plastered with seditious posters. In England the workers were desperate and mutinous.

Leaving the disquieted land of his birth, Franklin's "ingenious worthy young man" was at last moving in the direction of his inclination. "I happened when a schoolboy to pick up a pleasing natural history of Virginia, and my inclination from that day of seeing the western side of the Atlantic never left me." Recommended by his academically uneducated patron to persons of standing on the other side, this emigrant of vast ignorance, shrewdness, and mother wit took with him an accumulation of memories above and below the threshold of consciousness. The agonized cries of tortured prisoners, the sufferings of wounded seamen, the misery and hunger of the helpless poor, the bigotry of piety, the insolence of power—with such inflammable stuff his memory was loaded. Carried by one of his fiery temperament, it was dangerous baggage and defied detection by the most alert of revenue officers.

At that time, he states, politics and war were wholly out of the range of his interest. Politics he abhorred as "jockeyship"; his Quaker upbringing plus experience led him to look upon war not only as a crime, but as blasphemy.

No longer a raw and adventurous youth, it was his modest ambition to secure a decent livelihood in some useful occupation and in a congenial environment. The government he was quitting, he said, consigned youth to the gallows and old age to sordid wretchedness. "There must be something wrong," he speculated, "in such a system." The times were obviously out of joint, but it had

not yet occurred to him that he was born to have a hand in setting them right. Nor did he, in his most harrowing experiences, ever regard his fate as "a cursed spite."

"A good man and a wise man may at times be angry with the world," said Southey, "at times grieved for it; but be sure no man was ever discontented with the world who did his duty in it."



## Chapter II

### AN EMIGRANT RELIGION

Emigrants to America, like converts to a new religion, elevated above their former rank, considered government and public affairs as part of their own concern, for which they were to pay the expense, and they watched them with circumspection. They soon found that government was not that complicated thing which church and state, to play into each other's hands, had represented it, and that to conduct it with proper effect was to conduct it justly. Common sense, common honesty, and civil manners qualify a man for government; and besides this, put a man in a situation that requires new thinking, and he will grow up to it. Man is but a learner all his life.—THOMAS PAINE.

WILLIAM PENN coming into possession of his province of Pennsylvania celebrated in peans of praise the unparalleled advantages it offered to settlers; the generous soil, the teeming abundance of streams and forest, insured independence to the industrious. His Quaker colonists were a simple people, honest and friendly. The government was just and lenient; justice and religious freedom were guaranteed to the humblest. Paine, following him, could have joined the old Scotch peasant in fervent song:

No foot of land do I possess  
Nor cottage in this wilderness.

Yet the proprietor of this vast possession might have envied the penniless emigrant his unalloyed satisfaction. The physical grandeur of the country overwhelmed

him—the towering mountains, the mighty rivers, beyond which lay that mysterious unexplored vastness stretching away to the Pacific. America was to Paine not the land of promise, but the land of fulfillment; he saw in it a new heaven and a new earth. What he saw and what he hoped for went to his head like strong drink.

Not that Pennsylvania had overtaken the millennium; enough was still to be done to make life interesting to a vigorous spirit. But the province seemed to be moving at a quickstep. Already liberty, equality, and fraternity had wrought marvels in men of Paine's own class, "the lower middle class," as it was reckoned in England, where it was bullied by the church and weighed down by the oppression of the state. Dismissed on the other side with the epithet "lower orders," or in Burke's provocative phrase, "the swinish multitude," this class was taking a hand in government and making a better go of it than their superiors across the water. The inhabitants respected themselves and the laws to which they were a party, and their affairs were managed with a very considerable amount of common sense. Hard work there was aplenty, but it brought to the workers independence and a certain dignity; they sat every man under his own vine, with none to make them afraid.

If we credit the resolution of the English Constitutional Society, the country in which Paine had spent the greater part of his life was "a prey to an arbitrary king, a senile peerage, a corrupt House of Commons, and a rapacious clergy." That this radical ebullition was not an overstatement may be inferred from Franklin's letters after he had made a tour of the kingdoms: "A small part of the society are landlords, great noblemen, and gentle-

men, extremely opulent, living in the highest affluence and magnificence. The bulk of the people are tenants, extremely poor, living in the most sordid wretchedness, in dirty hovels of mud and straw, and clothed only in rags.

“I thought often of the happiness of New England, where every man is a freeholder, has a vote in public affairs, lives in a tidy, warm house, has plenty of good food and fuel, with whole clothes from head to foot, the manufacture, perhaps, of his own family. Long may they continue in that situation! But, if they should ever envy the trade of these countries, I can put them in a way to obtain a share of it. Let them, with three-fourths of the people of Ireland, live the year round on potatoes and buttermilk, without shirts; then may their merchants export beef, butter, and linen. Let them, with the generality of the common people of Scotland, go barefoot; then may they make large exports in shoes and stockings; and if they will be content to wear rags, like the spinners and weavers of England, they may make clothes and stuffs for all parts of the world.

“Farther, if my countrymen ever wish for the honor of having among them a gentry enormously wealthy, let them sell their farms and pay racked rents; the scale of the landlords will rise as that of the tenants is depressed, who will soon become poor, tattered, dirty, and abject in spirit. Had I never been in the American colonies, but were to form my judgment of civil society by what I have lately seen, I should never advise a nation of savages to admit of civilization; for I assure you, that, in the possession and enjoyment of the various comforts of life, compared to these people, every Indian is a gentle-

man, and the effect of this kind of civil society seems to be the depressing of multitudes below the savage state that a few may be raised above it."

Food, shelter, and clothing, the fundamental necessities of life—men have trekked the world that they might possess them in greater abundance. Paine rejoiced in the material richness about him, though he asked but little of it for himself. But it was the spiritual potentialities of this new life which stirred him to transports of religious fervor. Free from the shackles of tradition and the servile poverty of Europe, this great, rich country was surely destined to be the savior of the world, its heaven-sent redeemer from an estate of sin and misery. The industry and prosperity of the people delighted him, but the vision of America's spiritual destiny was sheer intoxication to an incurable idealist. The long-suppressed poet was released to wander joyously in the "fields of imagination."

Fifteen years later he wrote a young American friend from the chaos of the European upheaval, when the bright morning star of American freedom was obscured by black clouds of doubt: "You touch me in a very tender part when you say my friends on your side the water 'cannot be reconciled to the idea of my resigning my adopted America, even for my native England.' . . . Though I am in as elegant a state of acquaintance here as any American that ever came over, my heart and myself are three thousand miles apart; and I had rather see my horse Button . . . eating the grass of Bordentown or Morrisania, than see all the pomp and show of Europe. . . .

"A thousand years hence . . . perhaps in less, Amer-





THE SCARRED VETERAN

Bust of Paine in the New York Historical Society, by the eccentric John Wesley Jarvis, nephew of John Wesley. Paine lived with the young artist for a time in New York City, after his return to America, broken in health by long confinement in a French prison.





ica may be what England now is! The innocence of her character that won the hearts of all nations in her favor may sound like a romance, and her inimitable virtue as if it had never been. The ruins of that liberty which thousands bled for, or suffered to obtain, may just furnish matter for a village tale . . . while the fashionable of that day, enveloped in dissipation, shall *deride the principle and deny the fact*.

“When we contemplate the fall of Empires and the extinction of nations of the ancient world, we see but little to excite our regret than the moldering ruins of pompous palaces, magnificent monuments, lofty pyramids . . . of the most costly workmanship. But when the Empire of America shall fall, the subject for contemplative sorrow will be infinitely greater than crumbling brass or marble can inspire. It will not then be said, Here stood a temple of vast antiquity . . . here rose a Babel of invisible height, or there a palace of stupendous extravagance; but here, ah, painful thought! the noblest work of human wisdom, the grandest scene of human glory, the fair cause of freedom, rose and fell. Read this and then ask if I forget America.”

For the music of an English patriotic anthem he wrote “A New Song,” eschewing the boastful arrogance of the old song.

Hail, Great Republic of the World,  
The rising empire of the west,  
Where famed Columbus with a mighty mind  
inspired  
Gave tortured Europe scenes of rest.  
Be thou forever great and free,  
The land of love and liberty.

*Chorus*

May ages as they rise proclaim  
The glories of thy natal day,  
And states from thy, from thy exalted name  
Learn how to rule and to obey.

On November 30, 1774, the day Paine landed in America, the "Great Republic of the World" was not even a speck on the horizon. Thirteen jealous, bickering colonies were unable to peer over the blinders of their boundary lines. It was the greenhorn with "the dash of genius" and the seer's eyes of unusual brilliance who saw and prophesied the continental greatness of the nation yet unborn, a nation in which old things should pass away and all things become new. "Those who are conversant with Europe," he wrote, "would be tempted to believe that even the air of the Atlantic disagrees with the constitution of foreign vices; if they survive the voyage they either expire on their arrival or linger away in incurable consumption. There is a happy something in the climate of America which disarms them of all power of infection and attraction."

In his enthusiasm for the new social order he was bored by the political agitation. The English people were in perpetual conflict with their government, and sooner or later the differences were "accommodated." Here was a land fresh from the hand of the Creator, a land of new human values, of magnificent possibilities. What folly, then, to waste on political stupidities the energy which might be employed in the vastly more important business of enriching the cultural life! "Put a people right," was his axiom, "and they will soon put a government right." "Whatever our political state, our happiness will always

depend upon ourselves." To Franklin he complained: "I thought it very hard to have the country set on fire about my ears almost the moment I arrived in it."

From the moment of his arrival, he completely identified himself with the interests of his adopted country. His appreciation was reciprocated by his new countrymen. Pennsylvania had recruited settlers mainly from his own class; possessed of sufficient intelligence to conduct their affairs with "circumspection," they were not overburdened with higher education. The "vast ignorance" of the new citizen was so far from being suspected that the Philosophical Society welcomed him with open arms, and opportunity opened doors on all sides.

Three months after landing, Franklin's protégé gave an encouraging account of himself to his patron: "Your countenancing me has obtained for me many friends and much reputation, for which please accept my sincere thanks. I have been applied to by several gentlemen to instruct their sons on very advantageous terms to myself, and a printer and bookseller here, a man of reputation and property, Robert Aitkin, has lately attempted a magazine, but having little or no turn that way himself, he has applied to me for assistance. He had not above three hundred subscribers when I first assisted him. We have now upwards of fifteen hundred, and daily increasing." This was speedy work for a stranger three months in the country, and a promising circulation report from one who had blossomed into author and editor in even less time.

Never had Paine been so happily situated; without a by-your-leave to any bishop he could preach to his heart's content. He gave free rein to that impulse, and in all that

he wrote, the Quaker slant is apparent. A whole kennel of under dogs was exhibited for public sympathy. Oddly enough, contributors were warned that *religion and politics* were tabooed subjects.

The sorest spot in the New World was the spot his pen first touched, Negro slavery. On economic, on moral, and on religious grounds he attacked slavery. It was a disease which would destroy the soul and body of the nation: "Under gospel light all distinctions of nations, and privileges of one above another are ceased. Christians are taught to account all men their neighbors, and love their neighbors as themselves; and do to all men as they would be done by; to do good to all men; and man-stealing is ranked with enormous crimes." Again and again he appealed to his public: "And when the Almighty shall have blessed us, and made us a people dependent only on him, then may our first gratitude be shown by an act of *continental legislation*, which shall put a stop to the importation of Negroes for sale, soften the hard fate of those already here, and in time procure their freedom."

Men held in bondage, he argued, "having no prospect before them whereon they may rest their sorrows and their hopes, have no reasonable inducement to render their services to society." The society which enslaved them must inevitably suffer, for nations no less than individuals can reap only what they have sown: "How just, how suitable to our crime is the punishment with which Providence threatens us? We have enslaved multitudes and shed much innocent blood, and now we are threatened with the same." As Congress was preparing its Declaration of Independence, he begged: "Forget not the hapless African."

Many of the wisest leaders, including Washington and Jefferson, were alive to the menace of slavery; the latter was especially outspoken. Charles Thomson writes to Jefferson in Paris: "It grieves me to the soul that there should be such just grounds for your apprehensions respecting the irritation that will be produced in the Southern States by what you have said of slavery. However, I would not have you discouraged. This is a cancer we must get rid of. It is a blot on our character that must be wiped out. If it cannot be done by religion, reason, and philosophy, confident I am that it will be one day by blood. I confess that I am more afraid of this than of the Algerian piracies, or the jealousy entertained of us by the European powers."

The eloquence of "Mad Tom," as Paine was sometimes called, went unheeded. Penny wise and pound foolish, the practical southern politicians refused to yield ground. The sore which Paine vainly tried to cure by gentler treatment was finally lanced by the sword and healed only after copious blood-letting.

Within a month after the publication of his first essay on slavery, however, the first organized antislavery movement was started in Philadelphia, and a few months later the Quakers issued an Emancipation Proclamation binding on all who desired to retain membership in that Society. Lincoln averred that he never tired of reading the works of Thomas Paine, and a distinct flavor of that favorite author is discernible in some of the Emancipator's speeches.

Extravagant claims have been made for Paine by his admirers, among others that it was he who first proposed the abolition of slavery. In the constitution of the prov-



ince of Pennsylvania, William Penn had a clause looking toward gradual abolition. In 1688 the German Quakers of that province made the first group protest against chattel slavery, declaring that as it was not doing to others as they themselves would be done by, the practice of holding men in bondage was antichristian.

In the best sense of the word, Paine became an American patriot from the day he landed. He was the first and most ardent advocate of a union one and indivisible; petty jealousies and sectional prejudices must not sully the land of his love. Righteousness exalteth a nation; above all the nations of the earth America should be exalted.

But America was not to live unto herself alone: in his magazine he played with ideas of world disarmament and international arbitration, though he was not, as often claimed, the first to whom such ideas had occurred. William Penn had ridden the same hobbies, nor was he the first in whose imagination the thought had quickened. Paine himself says: "It is attributed to Henry IV. of France, a man of an enlarged and benevolent heart, that he proposed, about the year 1620, a plan for abolishing war in Europe. The plan consisted in constituting an European congress, or, as the French authors style it, a pacific republic; by appointing delegates from the several nations, who were to act as a court of arbitration. . . ." His unconquerable distrust of the British government made it impossible for Paine to go the whole way with the Quakers in the matter of non-violence, but "I am thus far a Quaker, that I would gladly agree with all the world to lay aside the use of arms, and settle matters by negotiation." Strong-armed governments have always



looked coldly on such proposals, but, said William Blake, "Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth." It is in the imagination that new truths are conceived.

In his brief career as editor, Paine inveighed against cruelty to animals; against cruelty to authors, who, in the absence of an international copyright, were being fleeced. This crusade for an international copyright law is particularly interesting, as he made over to the various causes which enlisted his devotion copyrights which would have made him a very rich man.

The first lance broken on this continent in the cause of feminism was probably his *Occasional Letter on the Female Sex*. Not a country in the world, he contended, gave freedom to women; everywhere they were adored and oppressed: "Affronted in one country by polygamy, which gives them their rivals for inseparable companions; enslaved in another by indissoluble ties, which often joins the gentle to the rude, and sensibility to brutality: Even in countries where they are esteemed most happy, constrained in their desires in the disposal of their goods, robbed of freedom of will by the laws, the slaves of opinion, which rules them with absolute sway, and construes the slightest appearance into guilt . . . who does not feel for the tender sex? Yet such I am sorry to say is the lot of women over the whole earth.

"Even among people where beauty received the highest homage, we find men would deprive the sex of every kind of reputation. 'The most virtuous woman,' says a celebrated Greek, 'is she who is least talked of.' That morose man while he imposes duties on woman, would deprive them of the sweets of public esteem, and in exact-

ing virtues from them would make it a crime to aspire to honor."

Man's inhumanity to man or beast started Paine on the warpath; cudgel in hand, he battled for the defenseless. "Where liberty is, there is my country," said Franklin. "Where liberty is not, there is mine," said Paine. Hitherto Paine had been considered an indolent man; stimulated now by a sense of usefulness and a gratifying appreciation, he was as busy as a nailer. And all for the munificent salary of fifty pounds a years, or about sixty cents a day. It was certainly no more than the bare subsistence mentioned by Franklin; yet he was perfectly satisfied, conscious that he was adequate to his opportunities. "In great affairs where the happiness of man is concerned I love to work for nothing," he said. Sixty cents a day is as close to nothing as it is prudent to go. The cynical would have us believe that only the lash of fear or the lure of gain will drive men to exertion, and this in the face of all the evidence that the most important contributions to society have been made by those who worked with an eye single to achievement. Society, Paine insisted, owes a decent living to all its members, and every man owes to society the best and utmost he has to give.

Certainly no millionaire ever got more satisfaction from his superfluities than Paine, cantering contentedly along the path of inclination, got out of his fifty pounds a year. His world was full of a number of things to be done, infinitely more interesting than a squabble over taxes. He was in no mood to be diverted from his course by jockeying politics: "Conceiving myself happy, I wished everybody else so." The political situation was reassuring by reason of the moderation of the American

temper: "The speeches of the different governors pathetically lament the present situation of affairs. Yet they breathe a spirit of mildness as well as of tenderness, and give encouragement to hope that some happy method of accommodation may yet arise." Paine was domiciled in a Quaker colony where mildness was inculcated as a principle of religion. The government construed that mildness as cowardice, and a happy method of accommodation was not even attempted. On the homeopathic principle that like cures like, it was supposed that colonial grievance would be cured by more grievance.

King George clearly foresaw what actually happened, that unless the American distemper could be stamped out, the whole kingdom would be infected and menace the sort of government for which he stood. Governor Hutchinson was well within the truth when he hinted to the ministry that his Majesty's American subjects were much more loyal than those of the home country. Ireland was feverish, and at this time, under the Protestant leadership of the North, refused to submit to economic vassalage for the benefit of the stronger kingdom. Franklin wrote that all Ireland was on the side of America. As for the king, he was as innocent as a child of the character of those backwoodsmen three thousand miles away, whose continual appeals for redress invariably expressed devotion to his person. Warnings were not wanting, but they profited the king nothing; his belief in force was unshakable.

Four years before the Battle of Lexington, where the colonials lost only eight men, North Carolina with more pluck than judgment rashly resisted authority, with a loss of about thirty men; the leaders were hanged.

Long-headed Sam Adams more prudently resolved to bide his time until the colonists could show a united front; sporadic outbursts could only end disastrously. That union was being gradually effected by the home government. When Massachusetts was severely punished, Virginia came gallantly to her support. But Pennsylvania was the Keystone State; powerful, prosperous, and pacific, she was disinclined to violent action, and interposed an impassable wall between the northern and southern colonies. Until Pennsylvania could be brought to see the necessity for extreme measures, the king-hating Yankee rebel would hold the colony to the north in leash.

Although the Quakers had definitely withdrawn from the politics of their own colony as a society, they exerted a tremendous influence. The German settlers were not politically minded and were content to follow the Quaker lead. When the Port of Boston was closed by royal edict, in the hope of starving the Massachusetts rebels into submission, the neighbor colonies came generously to her aid. Virginia sent up grain; sheep were herded up from Connecticut; Pennsylvania contributed nine thousand barrels of flour, besides other necessities. The Quakers were willing to frustrate the ministerial scheme of starvation and gave bountifully of their substance to relieve the colony where once they had been brutally persecuted, but there they parted company with the others. Their principles would not permit them to requite evil with evil, nor to inflict suffering on the people of England in retaliation for the sins of their government. At the outset Pennsylvania balked at the non-importation agreement into which most of the colonies entered,



They explained their unwillingness: "We have been taught from our youth to entertain tender and brotherly affection for our fellow subjects at home. The interruption of our commerce must distress great numbers of them. We therefore request that the deputies you shall appoint may be instructed to exert themselves at the Congress to induce members of it to consent to make a full and precise statement of grievances, and a decent yet firm claim of redress, and to await the event before any step is taken. It is our opinion that persons should be appointed and sent home to present this state and claim at the Court of Great Britain."

For nearly a century a policy of plain common sense and fair play had produced admirably satisfactory results in their dealings with the Indians; it was assumed that the English government would be equally open to an appeal to reason. The assumption unfortunately proved to be unfounded. The government on their part were no less mistaken in attributing this reluctance to cowardice. Resisting unjust taxation was an old game with the Quakers, and when they stated their grievances with "decent firmness," experience should have taught the ministry that it was time to pause and reflect.

Philadelphia had a tea party, a more quiet and decorous affair than the famous one of Boston. It was not allowable to destroy the property of others; the tea was therefore returned to England with a polite explanation that the method of taxation was objectionable; the captain of the vessel was reimbursed for his personal loss. This ominous quietness made little impression on the other side. Lord Sandwich, first Lord of the Admiralty, was assured that the Americans "would bluster and swell



when danger is at a distance, but when it comes near, they will like all other mobs throw down their arms and run away."

Paine frequently professed his profound respect for the Quakers as the only sect which practiced the teachings of Jesus without equivocation, a people so just and moderate that they had tamed the wild men. The insolence of the king in refusing to negotiate enraged him, while the spectacle of the Quakers in continual and humble supplication before the throne of a royal nincompoop excited him to a quite un-Quakerish fury against their humility. It was the opinion of Samuel Adams that, "let the consequences be what they may, it is [the king's] unalterable determination to compel the colonies to absolute obedience." This opinion Paine in time shared, and when the ministry backed up the king's unalterable determination with men and arms, declaring that the differences could only be settled with the sword, his indignation boiled over.

In his *Letter to the People of England* he tells how he was converted from indifference to a belief in physical force: "I happened to come to America a few months before the breaking out of hostilities. I found the disposition of the people such that they might have been led by a thread and governed by a reed. Their suspicion was quick and penetrating, but their attachment to Britain was obstinate, and at that time it was a kind of treason to speak against it. . . . Their idea of grievance operated without resentment; and their single object was reconciliation. Bad as I believed the ministry to be, I never conceived them capable of a measure so rash and wicked as the commencing of hostilities; much less did I

imagine that the nation would encourage it. I viewed the dispute as a kind of lawsuit, in which I supposed the parties would find a way either to decide or settle it. . . . I had no thought of independence or arms. The world could not then have persuaded me that I should be either a soldier or an author. If I had any talents for either they were buried in me. . . . I had formed my plan of life, and conceiving myself happy, wished everybody else so. But when this country into which I had set my foot was set on fire about my ears, it was time to stir. *It was time for every man to stir.* In a country where all men are adventurers, the difference of a few years in their arrival could make none in their right."

When Paine found it time to stir, he endeavored to persuade the whole continent to stir with him. It might be inferred from school histories that in the year 1776 this land was inhabited by three million determined democrats who rose as one man denouncing a despotic king and shouting valiantly, "Liberty or death!" The situation was far otherwise. Up to the memorable first week of July, opinion was so divided that the outlook for united action seemed hopeless. The flattery which assailed the royal ear from the aggrieved colonies was as fulsome as the adulation of the courtiers who basked in the king's favor. One colonial manifesto proclaimed: "We are rebels against Parliament; we adore the king." "Our king," "the King of America," sang the patriotic chorus. These were the peans of Puritanism for a monarch content to be the husband of one wife, and who displayed a decent paternal interest in his own progeny. Such a paragon of domesticity seldom graced the throne, and it was confidently assumed that this model of paternity was also the "Father of his People."

His political children, however, were passing out of the adolescent period and claiming adult privileges. Partly from habit and family affection, partly from a sense of the security it afforded, they preferred to remain under the old roof, but they had outgrown the cat-o'-nine-tails discipline. The colonial leaders were not looking for trouble, though they were by no means so ready to shy at it as the English ministry fancied. The merchant class dreaded the loss of English protection: the aristocratic landed class was alarmed by the democratic trend. Gouverneur Morris preferred English domination to that of "the riotous mob" of his fellow citizens. Throughout the struggle the numerous royalists of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia gave aid and comfort to the invaders.

Only three months before he took command of the Continental army, George Washington on his way to the Continental Congress was accosted by a distressed clerical royalist who warned him that the road to Congress was the road to separation. The Colonel gave the good man leave to set him down for everything that was wicked if it ever was heard that he advocated independence. Benjamin Franklin assured his English friends that, drunk or sober, no man had ever in his presence mentioned independence. John Jay said that until the second humble petition of Congress met with contempt, he had never heard the subject mentioned by rich or poor. John Adams, represented by General Burgoyne as an influential mischief-making irreconcilable, wrote in retrospect: "There was never a moment *during the Revolution* when I would not have given everything I possessed for a restoration of the state of things before the contest began, *provided* we

could have a sufficient guarantee of its continuance."

Thomas Jefferson, who was able to contemplate a kingless government without terror, and who did not share Adams' distrust of the people, wrote: "There is not in the British Empire a man who more cordially loves a union with Great Britain than I do. But by the God that made me, I will cease to exist before I yield to a connection on such terms as the British Parliament proposes, and in this I think I speak the sentiments of America." The delegates from the Virginia province were instructed "to support the rights of Englishmen," but to make no break with Britain. In the spring of 1775 Jefferson wrote to Randolph: "Looking with fondness toward a reconciliation, I cannot help hoping that you may be able to expedite the good work."

The Pennsylvania Assembly resolved: "That the idea of unconstitutional independence is utterly abhorrent to our principles." That colony sent its ultra-conservative royalist governor, Richard Penn, to present their complaints in person to the best of kings. Penn never got within earshot of the monarch, who refused to receive any petitions from his transatlantic subjects except those craving pardon. Even that weary watcher, Sam Adams, who saw red at the mere mention of the king's name, was constrained by the most fractious of all the colonies to write begging letters to his Majesty—begging not for mercy, however, but for justice. In the bosom of his family, Adams declared that these epistles were destined to be "spurned by the royal boot."

Self-interest, habit, the prudence of a people accustomed to take a long look ahead before making a leap, all combined to discourage the radical extremists. Three



million colonists scattered over an immense area, with fifteen hundred miles of unfortified seacoast to defend against the mistress of the seas, without adequate equipment or the money to procure it, would naturally do a good deal of serious thinking before throwing down the gauntlet to a rich and warlike nation. They clung to the skirts of the mother country with the tenacity of a bull pup; it was Thomas Paine who threw the missile which loosened that grip, and George III. who put it in his hand.

It might be inferred from the terrified logic of the fearful patriot that the structure of even the greatest state was of a nature so fragile that the most insignificant group of garrulous agitators had only to huff and to puff to blow the thing over. The history of government does not support that theory; governments have fallen only by tripping over their own foolhardiness. Extreme radicalism and extreme conservatism, perpetually astride a seesaw, are balanced by the bulky average man. When his weight is shifted, one side or the other is in for a fall.

Many plausible explanations have been advanced by economists and historians to account for the revolt of the American colonists. The contributing causes were many, for nations, like individuals, act from mixed motives; greed accounts for much, egotism for more. The majority is an inert mass; it is in personality that high explosive is stored, and a lighted match will explode it. According to the Hebrew legend the human race was exiled from Paradise because of Eve's taste for apples, and since her day a small apple of discord has turned the scale of great events.







#### GETTING OUT THE VOTE

Samuel Adams and his constituency were born and bred in hatred of the episcopacy. But Samuel was a wily politician; if the episcopalian Virginians could be won by prayer he meant to win them.

### Chapter III

#### THE BIRTHDAY OF A NEW WORLD

Thomas Paine, the great libertarian and humanitarian, was the first to propose American independence, and he very greatly assisted in the birth of the United States of America. His memory is now honored by all nations.—GEORG BRANDES.

IN the last chilly month of 1774, Paine became an American citizen, and before he had time to get his bearings in a strange environment he found himself editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*. Already he foresaw a great Continental union which he believed would make tyranny tremble throughout the world. International differences would be settled not by violence, but by arbitration; the lion and the lamb would lie down together; public education would give to all youth a fair start; age would make a decent exit; in short, the knowledge of the Lord would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. For a few happy months he wandered enraptured in the fields of imagination, filling the pages of his publication with pleas for the defenseless.

From these crowding and delightful anticipations of a new and better world he was aroused by a great noise—the firing on the minutemen of Concord. Leaving his kennel of under dogs to fend for themselves, Paine leaped into the saddle to arouse the Continent. The horror of war was forgotten in his dread that the fairest flower of civilization might be nipped in the bud by the hand of a

despot. He no longer gazed into a distant heaven once his earthly paradise was threatened.

With profuse professions of love and loyalty the colonies had petitioned the king for redress, but with no hint of submission; and submission was his Majesty's ultimatum to all appeals. In the plenitude of accumulated wisdom a compliant ministry decided to terrorize these loving subjects into obedience, and they formulated a program which was carried out with English thoroughness. Downing Street issued a general order for burning American towns at the season of the year which would cause the keenest suffering to the inhabitants. Admiral Graves celebrated the glad New Year by making a bonfire of Portland, Maine. Ten weeks later the torch was put to Norfolk, Virginia, which was razed to the ground by the royal governor, Lord Dunmore, who declared martial law, so called, and proclaimed freedom to all slaves, belonging to the rebels, who were willing to take up arms against their masters. While the homeless people of Norfolk wandered about in chill weather seeking shelter, Dunmore, elated by his exploit, wrote to Lord Howe: "I must inform you that with our little corps *we have done wonders. . . .* The Blacks are flocking from all quarters, which I hope will oblige the rebels to disperse *to take care of their families.*" In this hope his Lordship was disappointed; less savage and vindictive than Lord Dunmore, the blacks soon flocked back to the old feed-bins.

Sam Adams was in hearty agreement with the wonder-working Lord Dunmore. More astute than the Solons of Downing Street—"This is a glorious day," said he, when eight Yankee farmers were carried off the field of

Lexington. The smoke of smoldering resentment rose all over the country. Little North Carolina had a rankling memory of her slain. Virginia, out of sympathy with a suffering neighbor, proclaimed a public fast on learning that the Port of Boston had been closed. John Jay expressed the hope that any future invader would prove as ruthless as the English, for they had united the people in the bond of a common suffering. Yet in spite of the ruthless tactics of the government, and even after the Battle of Lexington, the majority would have been satisfied with a return to the status of 1763; an adjustment of the tax situation would have quieted them. They had, as Washington noted, an infantile fear of standing alone, and were little concerned for the future.

Two Englishmen, hating each other with a perfect hatred, saw on the far horizon signs beyond the range of short-sighted colonial parochialism. The king on the throne realized with anxiety that the cloud rising on the western side of the Atlantic, no bigger than a man's hand, might be the portent of coming storm. With England restive under governmental, and Ireland under economic absolutism, there was no telling what mischief a storm might do. The king planned to control the forces of Nature by royal edict.

Not with anxiety but with joyful anticipation, Thomas Paine saw the same signs which troubled the king. If America could only be fired with courage and determination, "a new era for politics is struck," he said. To inflame the Continent with his own spirit, he wrote *Common Sense*. It was a fiery pamphlet, and it is admitted by friend and foe alike that printed words have never more admirably served the purpose whereunto they were sent.



It is a fashionable superficiality of the moment to heap on the memory of the Hanoverian king all the obloquy connected with the American rebellion, the king who was no more than a willing mouthpiece for a doomed system. It might be profitable to recall that this system numbered its adherents in America, who seem to have transmitted their faith in arbitrary government to their descendants.

The latest pronouncements of psychologists assure us that of all human urges, the satisfaction of the ego is the strongest. Long before the psychologists put in an appearance, the keen-witted Frenchman, de Tocqueville, worked out a theory of national psychology based on egotism. The great mediocrity in what is called a vigorous nation, particularly in a democracy, cannot as individuals find adequate gratification for egotism. The lumpy mass pools its individual egotism into a national pride, which is easily played upon by designing and predatory individuals. It is not, therefore, unusual to find a nation clamoring for war from which the majority can reap no benefit, and for which they must subsequently pay through the nose.

George III. was undoubtedly obsessed by the will to power no less than the royal egotist across the Channel. His people, however, had a way with kings which inclined him to be rather more circumspect. The little trickle of his personal egotism could never have caused a freshet had it not run into the deep channel of national pride. No Hanoverian taint accounts for the conduct of the English bishops, and it was that body which first advocated force to put down the Americans. A long-standing feud existed between the lords spiritual and the non-conformists of New England, as well as with the

Quakers of the middle States. Their aristocratic fellow churchmen in America, so Alexander McDougal warned the Massachusetts delegates, were banded together against "the leveling spirit of New England."

Very little that affected the interest of America escaped the watchful eye of Thomas Paine. In *Crisis* No. III, he quotes from the parliamentary register of 1776, citing the English to explain what they were fighting for: " 'The struggle,' says Lord Townsend, 'is now a struggle *for power*. . . . The only point which now remains to be determined is, in what manner the war can be most effectually prosecuted . . . in order to procure that *unconditional submission*, which has been so ably stated by the noble earl with the white staff.'

" 'The Americans,' says Lord Talbot, 'have been obstinate, undutiful and ungovernable from the very beginning, . . . and I am every day more convinced that this people will never be brought back to . . . the subordinate relation they stand in to this country, *till reduced to unconditional, effectual submission*; no concession on our part, no lenity, . . . will have any other effect but of increasing their insolence.'

"Lord Littleton: 'The more we conceded, the higher America rose in her demands, and the more insolent she has grown. . . . I am now for the most effective and decisive measures; . . . no alternative is left us, but to relinquish America forever, or . . . compel her to acknowledge the legislative authority of this country; and it is the principle of unconditional submission, I would be for maintaining.'

"Can words be more expressive than these?" Paine in-

quired of the American royalists. "Surely the Tories will believe the Tory lords!"

Insolence was a class privilege, the Tory lords assumed, and the letters and diaries of the time show that national egotism supported them. Governor Hutchinson, a rather lonesome aristocrat in Massachusetts, had been most unmercifully handled by rude and boisterous rebels. When he made his appearance in England, he met with a cordial reception in aristocratic circles; he told them in all sincerity what they had the will to believe, that a proper show of firmness would speedily quell the disobedient. His recorded daily conversations with men who moved the wheels of state show that the most arrogant would hear of no parley with the rebels until drastic measures had wrought a conviction of sin, a spirit of repentance, and unconditional submission to English dictation.

Others, more reasonable, deplored coercive methods as a stupid political blunder, admitted that the Americans had much right on their side, but held that right or wrong, it would be fatal for the Imperial government to back down. It was beneath the dignity of the Empire to yield; therefore the colonists must be forced to submit. Unless the increasing *insolence* of democracy could be checked, it would sweep all before it. All over the world it was reaching out for more power and refusing unconditional submission to authority; a class-conscious aristocracy, determined to survive with all its accumulated privileges, resisted the movement.

Class privilege had many staunch supporters on this side the water, while many generous and liberal spirits on the other side championed the cause of liberty and lined up against their government. Indeed, there is evidence

to support the assertion that astute European liberals were awake to the full significance of the struggle long before the Americans themselves.

As far back as 1774, Lord Albemarle stated that the Opposition party in fighting against ministerial measures acted on "a deep, well-grounded conviction that if despotism were once established in America, arbitrary government would at least be attempted in the mother country." Like-minded men were more concerned for the preservation of national liberty than for their class privileges. All Europe was interested in the outcome of the struggle. The Frenchman Morellet wrote to Lord Shelburne: "If the independence of America had perished, your constitution would have been overthrown and your freedom lost." And so Frederick the Great believed.

Some few heroic champions of the American cause went so far as to throw down the gauntlet to their government. Believing with Thomas Paine that it was to society and not to government that men owed loyalty, Lord Effingham, a distinguished soldier, resigned from the army rather than make war on the colonists: "When the duties of a soldier and a citizen become inconsistent," he wrote the government in explanation of his resignation, "I shall always think myself obliged to sink the character of the soldier in that of the citizen, till such time as those duties shall again, by the malice of our *real enemies* become united." Lauding his devotion to principle, the Guild of Dublin Merchants voted Effingham a memorial. Neither he nor they seem to have come off any the worse for openly expressed opposition, even under the despotic rule of George III. The memory of such lone heroes is not kept green by noisy patriots.



Then there was Colonel Barre, who had fought side by side with the colonials in the French war. Mr. Grenville in a speech in Parliament dwelt with great pathos on the numerous blessings unselfishly showered by the generous mother country on her unworthy and ungrateful children. Indignant, Barre sprang up to refute the statements of the honorable member.

*"Children planted by your care! No! Your oppression planted them in America. They fled from your tyranny into an uncultivated land, where they were exposed to almost all the hardships to which human nature is liable. . . .*

*"They nourished by your indulgence! They grew up by your neglect of them. Some (colonial officials) to my knowledge, were glad, by going to foreign countries, to escape being brought to the bar of justice in their own.*

*"They protected by your arms! They have nobly taken up arms in your defense."*

All of which leads us to pause and consider the matter of free speech. Is a democracy less tolerant of differences of opinion than an aristocracy? In the late war, self-constituted censors of patriotism went much further in suppressing and penalizing independent opinion than George III. dared to go in punishing Barre, Effingham, or the Guild of Dublin Merchants. What then has become of the inheritance bequeathed us by the fathers? For, according to their own statements, they jeopardized their lives and hazarded their fortunes, not only to insure political liberty to posterity, but that they might enjoy to the full personal liberty.

In the light of current events, we may well question whether that which Paine feared has not already come



upon us—that the successors of the great founding fathers now “deride the principle and deny the fact” for which they fought. Patriotic societies lately clamored for life sentence or deportation for those who held unpopular opinions. During the Great War a leading Chicago paper demanded that the city’s most useful citizen, Jane Addams, be treated like any ordinary criminal for publicly expressing the Christian hope that the sentiments of peace and good will to all men would triumph over war hysteria and hatred. Milton had faith that, “though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple, who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?”

Eminent jurists and statesmen have approved the sentiments of the poet’s liberty speech. It was the judicial pronouncement of Lord Landsborough, endorsed by Thomas Jefferson: “Every man may publish at his discretion, his opinions concerning forms and systems of government. If they be weak and absurd they will be laughed at and forgotten, and if bona fide, they cannot be criminal, *however erroneous*.”

To return to Paine, nothing short of arson and murder could have converted that war-hating libertarian into an advocate of physical violence. He was as class-conscious as king or noble; his personal acquaintance with the king’s tutor convinced him that the royal personage had greater mental limitations, and less education, than himself. Men of his own class, endowed with good common sense, had patiently and modestly pleaded with the throne for a redress of wrongs; the king opposed the logic

of fire and sword, and proclaimed a withdrawal of his royal protection from the petitioners. The time had come to protect themselves from kingly absolutism.

The government's refusal to negotiate, insisting on the right "to bind in all cases whatsoever," reiterating it with a volley of lead—this it was that exploded the dynamite which, unknown to himself or the customs, Paine carried in. The explosion opened a wide mental aperture. He had been reared among a group which had fought to the death for spiritual freedom, but accepted civil government as a divinely ordained institution, not to be meddled with unless it interfered with allegiance to a higher power. Now, through the new peep-hole he saw an interlocking system of government, bolstered by a servile church, drilling mankind in subordination, regimenting them for its own sordid ends, not for service to society. The power which the masses in their simplicity had given the government was used for their subjection. "Divine institution!" he shouted—"Divine humbug!" It was a rotten, tottering system, which enslaved society instead of serving it. Let America crash into it, and the world would follow. Up and at them, Brandenburgers! This is a soul-stirring fight, and worth getting into.

Before Paine appeared on the scene there had been a simmering contention with the government about the right of taxation; taxation was a symptom, not the disease. Plunging into the fray, he urged it into a fight for human freedom, in the outcome of which, as he believed with religious ardor, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. That the right would eventually triumph he never doubted.

In his passionate appeal to the skeptical he raked his-

tory, political economy, and Holy Writ for arguments. Contending that "a king is a political superfluity," he introduced the Old Testament as evidence that royalty was inflicted on the Jews in punishment for sin. *Common Sense* was published in February of 1776, and was read by every inhabitant of the colonies who was able to read. It inspired even the dull and indifferent with a sense of enlisting in a stupendous, world-shaking, and glorious undertaking, and drew the scattered groups together into a real revolution. It made a stirring appeal to emotion, the spring of all action, and there is still, after the lapse of many years, a lift in it:

"The cause of America is in great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances have, and will arise which are not local but universal, and through which the prejudices of all lovers of mankind are affected, and in the event of which their affections are interested. The laying of a country waste with fire and sword, declaring war against the natural rights of all mankind, and extirpating the defenders thereof from the face of the earth, is the common cause of every man to whom nature hath given the power of feeling; of which class, regardless of party censure, is THE AUTHOR."

Nature had added the gift of arousing feeling in others, a power which the author possessed beyond all his contemporaries. He thoroughly understood the people and could make them dance to his piping. In words almost identical with those of William Penn, he differentiated between loyalty to the state and loyalty to society; loyalty to the former should be conditioned on its service to the interests of the latter. The good behavior of any

government is only insured by the eternal vigilance of the governed:

“Society is produced by our wants, government by our wickedness. . . . Society in every state is a blessing, government in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst an intolerable one, for when we suffer the same miseries *by a government*, which we might expect in a country without a government, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built upon the ruins of the bowers of paradise. For were the impulses of conscience clear, uniform and irresistibly obeyed, man would need no other lawgiver.”

Men thrown together in wild and uninhabited places would naturally band together in mutual dependence: “This frequent interchange will establish a common interest . . . and on this (not on the unmeaning name of king) depends the strength of a government and the happiness of the governed.”

Pious souls with inherited ideas of the God-ordained authority of the powers that be were asked to consider the origin of kingly power and aristocratic privilege: “England since the Conquest, hath known some few good monarchs, but groaned beneath a much larger number of bad ones; yet no man in his senses can say that their claim under William the Conqueror is a very honorable one. A French bastard, landing with an armed banditti, and establishing himself king of England against the consent of the natives, is, in plain terms, a very paltry, rascally original.—It certainly hath no divinity in it. However, it is needless to spend much time



in exposing the folly of hereditary right; if any are so weak as to believe in it, let them promiscuously worship the ass and the lion and welcome. I shall neither copy their humility nor disturb their devotion." If, as many claimed, America was subject to England by right of conquest, England, by the same reasoning, should be subject to France.

He pays his respects to the notorious bribery of the reigning monarch: "The corrupt influence of the crown, by having all the places in its disposal, hath so effectually swallowed up the power, and eaten up the virtue of the House of Commons (the republican part of the constitution) that the government of England is nearly as monarchical as that of France or Spain. . . . In England the king hath little more to do than to make war and give away places, which, in plain terms, is to impoverish the nation and set it together by the ears. A pretty business indeed for a man to be allowed eight hundred thousand sterling a year, and worshiped into the bargain! Of more worth is one honest man to society, and in the sight of God, than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived."

Liberty and security depend on the social conscience developed among any people, and not on government: "The prejudice of Englishmen in favor of their own government by king, lords and commons, arises as much or more from national pride than reason. Individuals are undoubtedly safer in England than in some other countries, but the Will of the king is as much the law of the land in Britain as in France, with this difference, that instead of proceeding directly from his mouth, it is handed to the people in the formidable shape of an act of parliament. For the fate of Charles First hath only



made kings more subtle—not more just. Wherefore, laying aside all national pride and prejudice . . . the plain truth is, *that it is wholly owing to the constitution of the people, and not to the constitution of the government,* that the crown is not as oppressive in England as in Turkey.”

“Men of all ranks, with differing motives and designs had come into the controversy,” Paine wrote, and he therefore argued the cause of independence from every angle, self-interest, economic advantage, national pride, idealism and fear, the certainty of cruel reprisals on the part of the government in case the rebels were defeated. In presenting the political and economic advantages of separation he argues shrewdly, but in his constantly recurring appeal to idealism he becomes lyrical. America—great! free! independent! the vanguard of the fight for the liberation of mankind! In the person of one Pelham, he contemptuously disposes of the temporizing. Replying to the criticism that his measures were “of a temporary kind,” that politician had said, “They will last my time.” “Should a thought so fatal and unmanly possess the colonies in the present contest,” Paine comments, “the name of ancestors will be remembered by future generations with detestation.”

The king’s correspondence with Lord North shows that there was on his part no shrinking from hostilities: “The New England government are in a state of rebellion, blows must decide whether they are to be subject to this country or independent.” With an eye to the Pennsylvania Quakers, Paine fastens the odium of violence on the king, and enumerates the miseries, the bloodshed, the property destruction already laid to the charge of the

"parent country." "Arms as the last resource decide the contest. The appeal was the choice of the king, and the continent hath accepted the challenge."

There were the timid to be braced up, those who preferred present ills to unknown perils, and who dreaded responsibility: "She hath protected us, say some. That she hath . . . defended the continent at our expense as well as her own, is admitted, and she would have defended Turkey from the same motives, viz. for the sake of trade and dominion. . . . England consults the good of this country no further than it answers her own purpose. . . . Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats, under the violated name of parent and child. . . . Everything short of that is mere patchwork . . . can afford no lasting felicity . . . is leaving the sword to our children, and shrinking back, when, going a little further, would have rendered this continent the glory of the earth. . . . Dearly, dearly do we pay for the repeal of the acts, if that is all we fight for; for in a just estimation, it is as great a folly to pay a Bunker Hill price for law as for land. . . .

"No man was a warmer wisher for a reconciliation than myself before the fatal nineteenth of April, 1775, but the moment the event of that day was made known, I rejected the hardened sullen tempered Pharaoh of England forever: and disdain the wretch, that with the pretended title of 'Father of his People!' can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul."

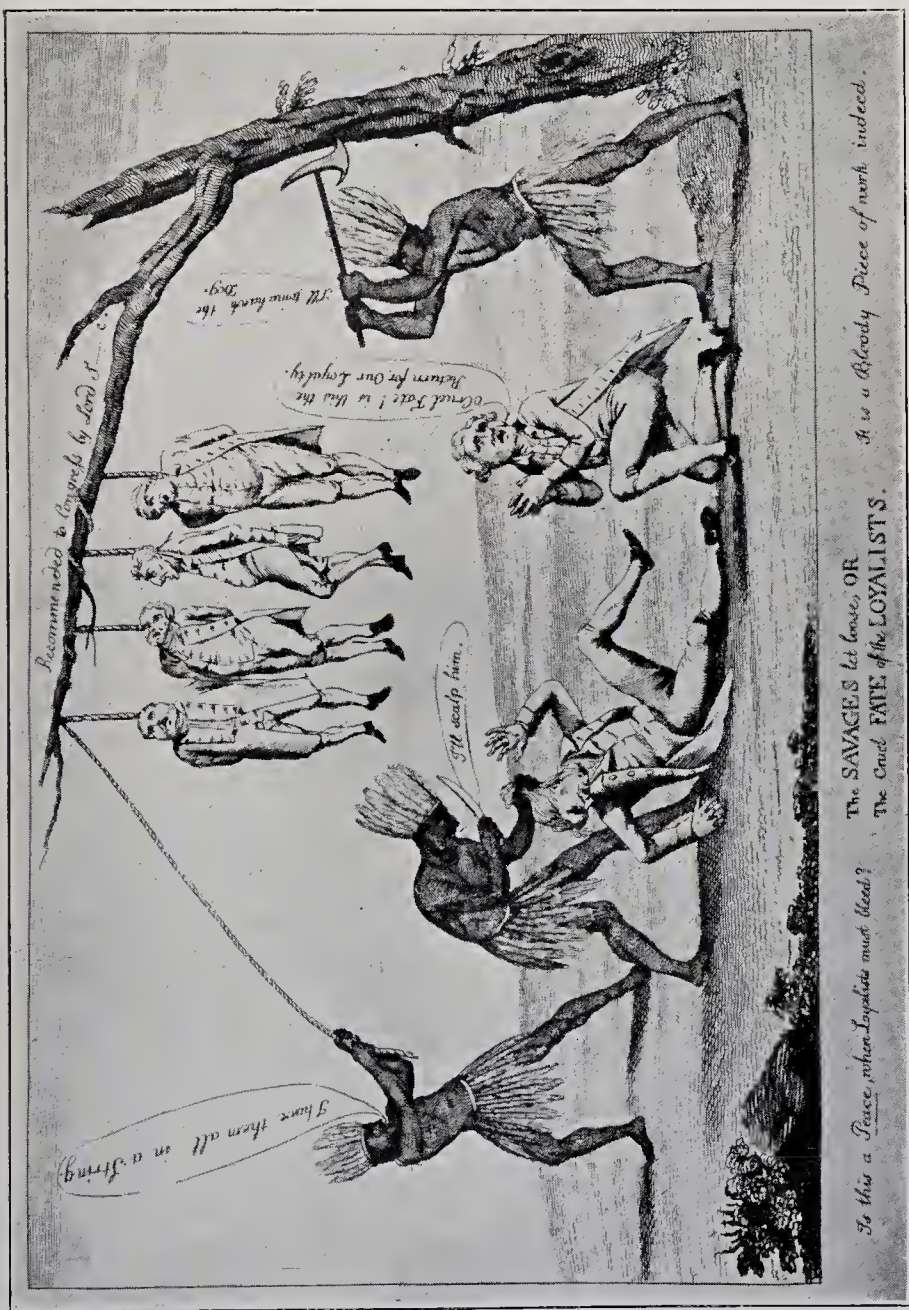
As prophet and preacher, Paine appealed to the religious spirit of America: "The sun never shined on a cause

of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province or a kingdom, but of a *continent*—of at least one-eighth of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year or an age; posterity are involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time by proceedings now. Now is the seed time of continental union, faith and honor. The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound will enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters. . . . The authority of Britain over this continent . . . sooner or later must have an end." Delay, then, he declared, was the refuge of cowards.

Many a sturdy rebel was sobered by the thought: After independence, what then? Paine met this question with a plan: "The continental belt is too loosely buckled"; there was no hope save in union. "If there is any cause for fear respecting independence, it is because *no plan is yet laid down*. Men do not see their way out, wherefore, as an opening to that business, I offer the following hints; at the same time modestly affirming, that I have no other opinion of them myself, than that they may be the means of giving rise to something better."

He outlined a plan for a federal union, with a continental charter and a continental conference, "always remembering that our strength is *continental*, not provincial." It may be affirmed without exaggeration that Paine was the first and staunchest advocate of a union, one and indivisible. The business of the assembled delegates, under the proposed plan, was to secure "freedom and property to all men, and above all things, the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience."





### THE BOLSHIEVISTS OF '76

The American rebels were the Reds of their time, the boggy of European conservatism. The English pictured them as red savages. France aided them because she loved England less, not America more. This print represents them scalping the civilized and gentlemanly royalists. (Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum.)





No law was to be passed by the federal assembly without a three-fifths vote of all the delegates. Assuming that with no king to corrupt, no aristocracy to bully them, the delegates would honestly represent the people, Paine was confident that the proposed plan would insure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to all: "He that will promote discord under a government so equally formed as this, would have joined Lucifer in his revolt."

A word to those who still regarded the kingly office as an institution ordained of God: "But where say some is the king of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the royal brute of Britain. . . . As in absolute governments the king is law, so in free countries the law ought to be king; and there ought to be no other."

Again, an eloquent appeal for a broad view and a generous spirit: "O! ye that love mankind! ye that dare not only to oppose tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath long been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind. . . . To expend millions for the sake of getting a few vile acts repealed, and routing the present ministry only, is unworthy the charge . . . and is the true characteristic of a narrow heart and a peddling politician. History informs us that the bravest achievements were always accomplished in the non-age of a nation. . . . The city of London notwithstanding its numbers submits to continued insults with the patience of a coward. . . . The rich in general are slaves to fear,

and submit to courtly power with the trembling duplicity of a spaniel. Youth is the seed time of good habits, as well in nations as in individuals."

He had an argument even for the trembling spaniel breed, of which New York, Boston, and Philadelphia had their quotas. To the timid merchants he suggested that instead of filling the royal waste-basket with unread petitions, they might better take courage and be up and doing. Why not make a bold bid for European support by offering to other powers a share of the trade hitherto monopolized by Britain? "Such a memorial would produce more good effects on this continent, than if a ship were freighted with petitions to Britain."

Dr. Rush is authority for the statement that a paragraph in *Common Sense* was blue-penciled by Franklin: "A greater absurdity cannot be conceived of than three million people running to their sea coast every time a ship arrives from London, to know what portion of liberty they should enjoy."

*Common Sense* was published anonymously, and was credited to Franklin and to John Adams. Reproached by an English acquaintance for using the phrase, "royal brute of Britain," Franklin retorted that his respect for the brute creation should exonerate him from the suspicion of authorship.

*Common Sense* and the speech from the throne were published in Philadelphia on the same day; the king was of great assistance to Mr. Paine. The first edition of *Common Sense* was snapped up almost overnight; to the second edition an appendix was added, characterizing the king's speech as "a finished piece of villainy . . . a formal and pompous method of offering up human sacri-

fice to the pride of tyrants. . . . The naked and untutored Indian is less savage than the King of Britain." In view of the royal disposition, which now, he asked, is the most practicable plan, reconciliation or independence? "I answer—That INDEPENDENCE being a simple line, contained within ourselves; and reconciliation a matter exceedingly perplexed and complicated, and in which a treacherous, capricious court is to interfere, gives the answer without a doubt."

Supplementing the royal speech, there arrived in America about the same time an *Address of the People of England to the Inhabitants of America*. Virginia had been so deeply touched by the repeal of the Stamp Act that her gratitude took the form of a statue erected to "the patriot king"; other colonies sent grateful memorials to the ministry. Blundering Sir John Dalrymple, assuming to be the spokesman for the English people, wrote reprovingly to the colonials: "If you are inclined to pay compliments to the administration, which we do not complain of, it is unfair to withhold them from the prince, BY WHOSE NOD ALONE THEY WERE PERMITTED TO DO ANYTHING." Paine was grateful to the gentleman who thus innocently poured oil upon the smoldering fires which he was endeavoring to fan into flame. Observe, he declared, "idolatry without a mask; he who can digest such a doctrine hath . . . sunk himself beneath the rank of animals, and contemptibly crawls through the earth like a worm."

*Common Sense* electrified the whole country; pro and con the controversy raged. In the appendix to the second edition, Paine trains his guns on the apostles of delay, and disposes of the argument that America would be

stronger fifty years later. He points out that the sale of the back lands would provide the sinews of war and cover all the expense of independent government. He finds the situation strangely astonishing: "Perfect independence contending for dependence. . . . The independence of America should have been considered as dating from, and published by, THE FIRST MUSKET THAT WAS FIRED AGAINST HER."

It was a glorious opportunity: "We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation similar to the present hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birthday of a new world is at hand. . . . *Wherefore*, instead of gazing at each other with suspicion and doubtful curiosity, let each of us hold out to his neighbor the hearty hand of fellowship, which, like an act of oblivion, shall bury in forgetfulness every former dissension. Let the name of whig and tory be extinct; and let none other be heard among us than that of good citizen; an open and resolute friend; and a virtuous supporter of the RIGHTS OF MANKIND, AND OF THE FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES OF AMERICA.

#### "THE END OF COMMON SENSE"

"Every living man in America who could read," said Theodore Parker, "read *Common Sense*." The letters of the delegates to the Congress of 1776 from Maine to Georgia refer to the pamphlet. English radicals and liberals hailed "the unknown Englishman." In his *History of the American Revolution*, Sir George Trevelyan writes: "It would be difficult to name any human composition which has had an effect at once so instant, so ex-



tended, and so lasting. . . . It was pirated, parodied and imitated, and translated into the language of every country where the new Republic had well-wishers. Parisians were of the opinion that it had a greater run in France than in America. Three months after its first appearance one hundred and twenty thousand copies had been sold, and it was calculated before the demand ceased that it had sold half a million. According to contemporary newspapers *Common Sense* turned thousands to independence who before could not endure the thought. It worked nothing short of miracles and turned Tories into Whigs." It converted George Washington, who has never been considered an emotional man, to a cause which he had but recently regarded as "everything that was wicked."

Up in Boston one determined but cautious rebel must have thrown his cap in the air. Even at that day Philadelphia was slow; "Boston must wait for Philadelphia," said Sam Adams. Now from that quiet city came the trumpet call to rebellion; the tortoise had taken the lead in the race.

The shuddering conservatives of New York were thrown into a panic. According to Rickman: "When *Common Sense* arrived at Albany the convention of New York was in session. General Scott was greatly alarmed at the dangerous boldness of the pamphlet, and mentioned his fears to his colleagues." Henry Wisner supplied John McKesson with a copy to be read at a private meeting, and a committee was appointed to refute it. It was carefully read, but no refutation was attempted. The New York delegates to the Congress had no instructions to vote for independence, but Wisner went it alone and sided with the rebels.



Washington, who but a few months before had been willing to be called everything that was wicked if he was ever heard advocating separation, now wrote: "My countrymen [Virginians] will come reluctantly to the idea of independence, but time and persecution bring wonderful things to pass; and by the letters which I have lately received from Virginia, I find *Common Sense* working a powerful change in the minds of men. A few more such flaming arguments as were exhibited at [Portland, Maine] and Norfolk [towns fired by the British], added to the sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning contained in the pamphlet *Common Sense*, will not leave numbers at a loss to decide upon the propriety of separation." The fires of burning towns helped to heat popular feeling; it has been said that to George III. first, and to Thomas Paine next, America owes her independence.

John Adams was somewhat perturbed by the precipitate boldness of this "disastrous meteor," as he characterized Paine, but reluctantly admitted: "All agree that there is a great deal of good sense delivered in clear simple and nervous style." Later on he expressed the belief that "Paine's pamphlet . . . crystallized public opinion, and was the *first factor* in bringing about the Revolution."

Abigail, his wife, that able and versatile lady who, while keeping the home fires burning, kept also a watchful eye on the political conflagration, was more enthusiastic than her lord. She was, she wrote him, "charmed with the sentiments of *Common Sense*," and wondered "how any heart, one who wishes the welfare of his country and the happiness of posterity, can hesitate a moment in adopting them. I dare say there would be no difficulty

in procuring a vote . . . from all the Assemblies of New England for Independency. I most sincerely wish that now, in the *lucky moment* it might be done." Mrs. Adams was impressed by Paine's distinction between government and society: "A people may let a king fall, yet still remain a people, but if a king lets his people slip from him, he is no longer a king."

Even the dastardly time-serving Cheetham, while attacking the author, is compelled to admit of *Common Sense*: "Speaking a language which the colonists had felt but not thought, its popularity, terrible in the consequences to the parent country, was unexampled in the history of the press. . . . His pen was an appendage to the army of independence as necessary and formidable as its cannon."

General Charles Lee, the fiery, unstable English officer, who for a time cast in his lot with the Americans, and finally turned traitor, wrote impatiently to one of the Virginia Lees: "The pulse of Congress is low. If you do not immediately declare for positive independence we are all ruined. There is a poorness of spirit, and a languor, in the late proceedings of Congress that I confess frightens me so much that at times I regret having embarked my all—my fortune, life and reputation—in their bottom. I sometimes wish I had settled in some country of slaves, where the most lenient master governs." To Lee, restless for the plunge, "Paine burst upon the world like Jove in thunder." The "unknown Englishman" who fourteen months before had emigrated in search of a job was no longer insignificant; he had become, by Trevelyan's account, the most popular author in the world. He was no longer an Englishman, but an American who had effected

a complete overturn of opinion in his adopted country. He was no longer without a job; his mission, as he conceived it, was to convert every inhabitant of the continent into an American with a world vision.

At this time, when he had reached the pinnacle of popularity, hailed as a deliverer on both sides of the Atlantic, Paine confided to John Adams a desire to publish his reflections on religion. This undertaking he prudently decided to postpone; at the moment the fight for American independence afforded sufficient outlet even for his fighting spirit. When the state had been upset there would be ample leisure to straighten out the church. In the flush of triumph which the tremendous success of *Common Sense* gave him, he was shaping in his mind *The Age of Reason*, which was to hurl him into the abyss of infamy, and erase his name from the honor roll of patriot founders.

"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious."

## Chapter IV

### H A N G I N G   T O G E T H E R

Go call thy Sons, instruct them what a debt  
They owe to their Ancestors and make them swear  
To pay it, by transmitting down intire  
Those sacred rights to which themselves were born.

—AKENSIDE.

Faith is . . . the evidence of things not seen. . . . By it the elders obtained a good report.—HEB. 11:1-2.

PAINE's partisans have gone to extremes to offset the gross injustice done his memory—some so far as to claim that he actually drafted the Declaration of Independence. Cobbett modifies this claim by asserting: "Whoever wrote it, Paine was the author." Sam Adams, who certainly had the whole situation at his finger ends, and who was credited with no small share in the enterprise, testified: "There is as much to substantiate this claim as can be said for any other person."

It seems improbable, however, that Paine had any share in drafting the document. There is in the Declaration an echo of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, previously drawn up by one of Jefferson's friends with his aid. After John Adams and Jefferson had fallen out, Adams wrote rather slightly of his old friend's work on the Declaration, tacitly implying, however, that it was his composition, which Jefferson as tacitly admitted. In a captious mood Adams wrote to Pickering: "The essence of it is in a pamphlet, voted and printed by the Town of

Boston before the first Congress met, composed by James Otis, as I suppose, in one of his lucid intervals, and pruned and polished by Samuel Adams."

To Adams' charge that the document lacked originality, Jefferson suavely retorted: "I did not consider it part of my charge to invent new ideas, and to offer no sentiments which had ever been expressed before. Had Mr. Adams been so restrained, Congress would have lost the benefit of his bold and impressive advocations of the rights of the Revolution. For no man's fervid addresses more than his, encouraged and supported us through the difficulties which, like the ceaseless action of gravity, weighed on us by night and day. Yet on the same ground, we may ask which of his elevated thoughts was new, or can be affirmed never before to have entered the conceptions of man?"

In the year 1819 *The Essex Register*, of Salem, Massachusetts, published the text of a Declaration of Independence claimed to have been made by the impulsive North Carolinians of Mecklenburg County just one month after the Battle of Lexington. The attack on the Lexington farmers must have opened an old sore in the southern colony, which had already lost a number of men in conflict with the British soldiery. The Mecklenburg Declaration was dated May 20, 1775, and informed all who might be interested in the matter that the cause of Boston was the cause of all, and that Mecklenburg County thereby dissolved all connection with "that Nation, who have wantonly trampled on our rights and liberties—and inhumanly shed the innocent blood of American patriots at Lexington." At the time this document was published in the *Register*, Paine had gone to his



grave amid torrents of abuse for his part in the French Revolution and the publication of *The Age of Reason*. John Adams was now an old man, and age had not softened the natural acidity of his temper. The publication of the alleged Mecklenburg Declaration aroused in him the spirit of '76, and Jefferson received a stinging letter: "How is it possible that this paper should have been concealed from me to this day—you know if I had possessed it—I would have made the Hall of Congress echo—and re-echo, with it fifteen months before *your* Declaration of Independence—What a poor ignorant, malicious, short-sighted, crapulous mass is Tom Paine's *Common Sense*, in comparison with this paper— . . . The genuine sense of America at that moment was *never so well expressed before or since*.—Richard Caswell, William Hooper, and Joseph Hughs the then Representatives of North Carolina in Congress you know as well as I do—and you know that the Unanimity of the States finally depended upon the Vote of Joseph Hughes—and was finally determined by him—and yet History is to ascribe the American Revolution to Thomas Paine—*Sat verbum Sapient.*"

Many a boulder is placed in the path of the student of history by the proneness of great men to contradict themselves in the stress and strain of politics. Political rancor had changed Paine's *Common Sense* from "a great deal of good sense, delivered in clear simple and nervous style," to "an ignorant, malicious, crapulous mass." The politics of Jefferson and Paine had become so abominable in the sight of Adams that he begrudged either an honorable place in the nation's history.

Jefferson replied to this acrimonious letter with his

usual courtesy and good humor, affirming his belief that the Mecklenburg Declaration was spurious. And history was carefully erasing from the honor roll of the founders the name of the man whose memory so irked the temper of John Adams.

In view of all the evidence, there is no reason to go back of the assertion which Jefferson caused to be engraved on his tombstone, that he was the "Author of the Declaration of American Independence." Franklin and Adams offered suggestions, and perhaps made some slight modifications. The important point is that the document articulated the sentiments of a strong and resolute minority, without whose support such a declaration would have proved futile. It is beyond questioning that this sustaining support was created by Thomas Paine; Adams' wrathful resentment is in itself evidence. Any one of a number of the delegates might have drafted the Declaration; it was Thomas Paine's unique distinction that, in the chaos of that time, he was the man on whom all the leaders relied to line up public opinion. *Common Sense* was the talk among the statesmen of the time; all admitted it to be an invaluable contribution to the cause, and Paine's most virulent enemies never denied the fact. Sam Adams believed that it was Paine who prepared the country to receive the Declaration as "a promulgation from heaven." It was Paine who popularized the principles of it, and he himself declares: "An army of principles will penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot—It will succeed where diplomatic management would fail. . . . It will march on the horizon of the world, AND IT WILL CONQUER."

Their own pens furnish abundant proof that the men

who traveled the roads leading to Philadelphia in 1776, mounted or in carriages, described by Washington as the worst roads ever trod by man or beast, were not at all angelic personages, nor even saintly heroes. They were nevertheless the most remarkable revolutionists in history, revolutionists under protest, cautious, sober, determined men. The road to independence was more dangerous than those in which their carriages were overturned. They were picked men who were taking a long chance as to person and pelf, the majority of them young, ranging in age from thirty to forty; Edward Rutledge was only twenty-six.

Over those well-nigh impassable roads, Jefferson rode north for six days. Wherever he went he carried with him a miniature fiddle which fitted into his portmanteau. He probably had his copy of Ossian with him; at any rate he carried it in his memory, and was thus well equipped to endure the tedium of the political wrangling.

Wily Sam Adams journeyed south, spick-and-span as never before in all his untidy life, from his new wig to his silk stockings. His resplendent outfit was the communistic effort of appreciative neighbors. He was, like Paine, of that class created by destiny for its own special purposes, and who serve that end to the utter disregard of personal concerns. Boston's popular delegate must make a brave appearance among those high-stepping young Virginia aristocrats; tailor, shoemaker, and wig-maker contributed generously to the good work, while a more affluent neighbor filled the lean purse.

John, his kinsman, went with him, a public-spirited, incorruptible man, but not popular; critical of his colleagues and distrustful of the mob. There was little love

lost between the rival colonies of Massachusetts and Virginia, notwithstanding occasional generous gestures on the part of each. Virginia proclaimed a public fast as an expression of sympathy when the Port of Boston was closed by the government, and George Mason of Gunston Hall sent word "to my dear little family that I charge them to pay strict attention to it, and that I desire my three eldest sons and my two eldest daughters may attend church in mourning, if they have it, as I believe they have." The report of the Battle of Lexington shocked the Virginia Assembly; the usually taciturn Colonel Washington made a brief speech, which even in that oratorical assembly passed for eloquence: "I will raise one thousand men, enlist them at my own expense, and march myself at their head for the relief of Boston."

But men do not stay perched for long periods on the great peaks of principle; the most high-minded find it necessary to descend occasionally for rest and relaxation. The colonies below Mason and Dixon's line looked to Virginia for leadership, and in this they did well. Massachusetts had assumed a sort of dictatorship over the northern colonies and was averse to the place of second fiddle. The travel-stained delegates who convened at Philadelphia were as suspicious of each other as strange dogs. Before the Declaration was drawn up, Braxton frankly relieved his mind in the Virginia Convention regarding the northern neighbors. "I abhor their manners—I abhor their laws—I abhor their religion—I abhor their governments." "When we first came together," said John Adams, "we found a strong jealousy of us from New England, and the Massachusetts in particular." Old, experienced, and tolerant of human frailty, it was Benjamin



Franklin who hinted at the advantage of hanging together over hanging separately. Everything human is imperfect, reasoned that imperturbable philosopher—including, no doubt, our own opinions.

John Dickinson had the advantage of standing on his native heath, surrounded by his own supporters; rich and influential, more or less a Quaker, and very cautious, a characteristic for which the bolder spirits, including the Adamses, used another word. Dickinson's constituents were preponderantly pacifist, conciliatory, and decidedly distrustful of the belligerent attitude of Massachusetts. Declaring that the idea of a political revolution was abhorrent to her principles, Pennsylvania had nevertheless resolved: "That the power assumed by the parliament of Great Britain to bind the people of these colonies 'by statute in all cases whatsoever' is unconstitutional," that this claim had brought about all the unhappy differences, and further: "That the act of parliament for shutting up the Port of Boston is unconstitutional, oppressive to the inhabitants of that town, dangerous to the liberties of the British colonies, & therefore we consider our brethren at Boston as suffering in the Common Cause. . . . That although a suspension of Commerce of this large trading Province with Great Britain would greatly distress multitudes of our industrious inhabitants, yet that sacrifice and a much greater we are ready to offer for our Liberties, but in tenderness to the people of Great Britain as well as of our country, and in hopes that our just remonstrances will at length reach the ears of our gracious sovereign & will no longer be treated with contempt by any of our fellow subjects in England, it is our earnest desire that the Congress should first try the gentler



mode of stating our grievances and making a firm and devout claim of redress." Pacifist Pennsylvania was gradually shifting ground toward the left. Their gracious sovereign, however, was standing pat, and was quite deaf on his American side, an unfortunate affliction which resulted in adding strength to the minority movement, gave the radicals the lead, and threw the moderates out of the running. Gouverneur Morris, who at first dreaded mob domination, was soon writing: "Trust crocodiles, trust the hungry wolf . . . or a rattlesnake . . . but trust the king, his Ministers, his Commissioners, it is madness in the extreme." The old prophets would have said that the Lord hardened the king's heart, and America became a nation.

For the conversion of the reluctant Dickinson, spokesman for the center party, the Boston left-wing faction put forth considerable effort. Reed of Pennsylvania was informed that Boston must hold back until Philadelphia could be prodded forward. Reed and Mifflin waited on Dickinson to do the prodding and accelerate the forward movement. They reported that they found him "cautious and timid." Nothing daunted, they followed up the first visit, hoping that "after a generous circulation of the glass Mr. Dickinson might be more animated, communicative and adventurous." But Mr. Dickinson was not adventurous even when artificially stimulated. He took alarm at any suggestion of extreme measures, "saying that he had a fortune and a reputation at stake." Hovering near to counteract the influence of the rebel seducers were his wife and mother. "Johnny," the latter warned, "you will be hanged; your estate will be forfeited; you

will leave your wife a widow and your children orphans, beggars, and infamous."

John Adams commiserated Dickinson's dilemma and congratulated himself in a letter to his own gallant, stout-hearted lady: "From my soul I pitied Mr. Dickinson. If my mother and wife had expressed such sentiments to me, I am certain that, if they did not wholly unman me and make me an apostate, they would make me the most miserable man alive." John Adams' most lovable side was turned to his own family.

The left-wing committee made little headway with the cautious Mr. Dickinson, even after the most generous circulation of the glass. It was, as Jefferson said, "the fostering hand of our king" which worked wonders after the rebels had failed. Recognizing the importance of winning the middle States, Congress was singularly patient with their representative, Mr. Dickinson. Jefferson, who was economical in the use of political Billingsgate, writes: "He was an honest man, and so able a one that he was greatly indulged even by those who did not feel his scruples. . . . Congress gave signal proof of their indulgence to Mr. Dickinson, and of their great desire not to go too fast for any respectable part of our body, in permitting him to draw their second petition to the king according to his own ideas, and passing it with scarcely any amendment. The disgust against its humility was general; and Mr. Dickinson's delight at its passage was the only circumstance which reconciled them to it. the vote being passed, altho' further observn. on it was out of order, he could not refrain from rising and expressing his satisfaction and concluded by saying 'there is but

one word, mr. President, in the paper which I disapprove, & that is the word *Congress*.' on which Ben Harrison rose and said 'there is but one word in the paper mr. President, of which I approve, and that is the word *Congress*.' " Colonial assemblies met in defiance of royal command. Except as an outlet for disgust at its humility, therefore, the wording of the petition was of no particular importance; it followed its predecessors into the wastebasket.

New York, rich and fearful, also held aloof from the extremists; the landholding aristocracy would support any sort of royal government rather than trust the democracy. Gouverneur Morris spoke the sentiments of his class: "I see it with fear and trembling, that if the disputes with Britain continue, we shall be under the worst of all possible dominions, the domination of a riotous mob." He was another convert of the king, willing to take his chance with the riotous mob, crocodiles, hungry wolves, or rattlesnakes in preference to trusting the royal government. When the delegates met in Philadelphia in 1776, Thomas Pickering warned: "You must not utter the word *Independence* . . . for the idea . . . is as unpopular in Pennsylvania and the middle and southern States as the Stamp Act itself." And John Adams "walked the streets of Philadelphia, borne down by the weight of care and unpopularity, but every ship brought fresh proof of the truth of my prophecies, and one after another became convinced of the truth of *Independence*."

It is no wonder then that John Adams, taking a look over the prospect, confided to his plucky wife, who was keeping up her end in Boston: "I am melancholy for the public and anxious for my family. As for myself a frock

and trousers, a hoe and a spade would do for my remaining days. For God's sake make your children hardy, active and industrious: for strength, activity and industry will be their only resource and independence." Adams never took a very cheerful view of the characters of the founding fathers. By nature a bit waspish, anxiety did not improve his disposition. Irritated by the thought that their descendants might show little improvement over the original stock, he addressed a few biting remarks to them via his beloved wife: "Posterity! you will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom! I hope you will make good use of it. If you do not, I shall repent it in heaven that I ever took half the pains to preserve it." For all he knew his own children might grow up to reproach him for an excess of patriotism: "But I will not bear the reproaches of my children. I will tell them that I studied and labored to procure a free constitution of government for them to solace themselves under, and if they do not prefer this to ample fortune, to ease and elegance they are not my children, and I care not what becomes of them."

The Continental Congress certainly faced some very hard sledding. It would not be difficult to prove that the Yankee delegates were a prejudiced, bigoted, and more or less provincial lot; that the southern planters were hot-headed and unyielding. It was the saving grace of all, however, that they could and did, in devotion to the cause, lay their sectional prejudices and jealousies on the sacrificial altar. On Sam Adams, of the strictest sect of the New England Calvinists, Episcopal vestments had much the same effect as the Ku Klux regalia on the Knights of Columbus. The Episcopal Church was estab-



lished by law in Virginia, and between it and the Puritans the bitterest enmity existed, a feud which extended into politics. The Virginia Colony had been the staunchest upholder of the rebellious northern neighbor in the determination to stand no more nonsense from the British government. Now they were met together to work out a plan of united action, and custom decreed that the Congress be opened with prayer. The delegates were on tenterhooks; to whichever sectarian faction the honor might fall, it was a foregone conclusion that there would be trouble with those embattled Christians, endangering the political situation. They reckoned without Sam Adams, the New England boss, whose one immediate purpose was to keep Virginia on the right side. If she could be won by prayer, by all means let her pray, and to the astonishment of all, it was the Yankee Puritan who asked an Episcopal clergyman to open the Congress.

John Adams, too, passionately Bostonian, brought his gifts to the altar. It was he who proposed the Virginia colonel for commander of the colonial forces. It was he who yielded place to another Virginian in drawing up the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson objected that this dangerous honor belonged of right to his colleague, but Adams insisted: "You are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. I am obnoxious and unpopular; you are very much otherwise. . . . Reason third, you can write ten times better than I can." If he was in less strenuous times ungenerous, let it be recorded to his eternal credit that he met the emergency like a good sport, and with consummate wisdom. Finally, it was Adams who nominated for secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs Thomas Paine, a



man whose temperament and principles were repugnant to him.

Yet although the delegates took to heart Franklin's hint as to the prospect for hanging, and the hempen necktie was the subject of merry jest by witty gentlemen, all was not peace and harmony in the City of Brotherly Love. Personal as well as sectional animosities divided them. The deliberate Dickinson was no favorite with the more aggressive Yankee members. In a letter to Abigail Adams, her husband referred to him as "a certain great fortune and piddling genius whose fame has been trumpeted so loudly." His correspondence was captured by the British, who gave it the widest publicity, theirs being the good old Roman policy: Divide and conquer. Dickinson behaved in rather petty fashion, and when next they met gave Adams the cut direct.

Washington had no high opinion of the Massachusetts men on the whole, who, he said, never let anything get by them on which they could lay their hands. He was, however, more discreet, or more fortunate in keeping his opinions confined to his own circle. As for the Adamses, during the progress of the war they openly aired their views as to General Washington's incompetence. It would be unseemly and not a little ungrateful for modern critics to exhibit the patriot fathers with the scathing frankness of their own time. Human and fallible they were, yet there is no reason to be ashamed of the appearance they make in the glaring light of history. The truth is as complex as human nature; half told, it is "ever the blackest of lies." Opinions, like dress, change with time; the public grows weary of men who have long been objects of sticky sentimentality. Those heroes are fortunate who,

in the period of reaction, retain any shreds of character. It is a contemptible pettiness to judge great men only by their lapses into littleness. Individuals, great or small, have an ebb as well as a flood tide; some few have spring tides of greatness.

American history might be adjudged to rest on the miraculous persevering patience of George Washington. But for his Gibraltar-like endurance, many of our national heroes would have worn the hempen necktie or have made an ignominious exit from the scene. Yet on those rare occasions when the General broke loose from all restraint and swore "by the eternal God," the favorite Virginia oath, the violence of the outbreak was appalling.

The men who made history in 1776 were a picked band who staked life and fortune on the issue. Some few were crooked, others were hesitating or unstable, many were narrow-minded and parochial. But compared with the rulers and diplomats who controlled the affairs of Europe, whose dark and underhand ways Gouverneur Morris later recorded day by day in his diary, the colonial leaders who went to Philadelphia with intent to overthrow their lawful government were giants of integrity and patriotism, and statesmen of no mean ability. Admitting all the weakness, the sordidness, the petty personal ambition, it remains to be said that they were not purchasable, and that they accomplished that whereunto they had set their hands, which was little short of a miracle. By mutual, even if reluctant forbearance, they brought order out of chaos, and triumphantly fused thirteen snarling colonies into a nation, very wobbly, but still a nation. Radicals are notorious for a wormlike

tendency to division; this group was never divided and never conquered.

Nevertheless, the Congress was skating on very thin ice; it was one thing to repudiate established authority; it was quite another thing to set up one that should command recognition. John Adams said the Congress was not "a legislative assembly, nor a representative assembly, but only a diplomatic assembly." There was bickering, jealousy, heartburning, and childish wrangling; there were foes within and without; yet that diplomatic assembly built its ship of state and launched it successfully. The scaffolding on which it was built was the work of Thomas Paine.

The work of construction was a severe strain on the health of the less robust. John Adams' peevishness with all mankind, past, present, and to come, is understandable and excusable. He was working eighteen hours and more a day, without remuneration, though he had a growing family on his mind, and for a cause which bade fair to bring him at last to the gallows. Worn out with anxiety and mental exertion, he unbosomed himself to his wife: "When fifty or sixty men have a constitution to form for a great empire; a country of fifteen hundred miles extent to fortify, millions to arm and train, an extensive commerce to regulate, numerous tribes of Indians to negotiate with, a standing army of twenty seven thousand men to raise, pay, victual and officer,—I shall really pity those fifty or sixty men." Nor was that all; he writes again: "I am wearied to death with the wrangles between military officers." Samuel Adams, he declared, was completely worn out, "and my case is worse."

Finally, surmounting all obstacles, the timidity of

New York, the opposition in Pennsylvania to violence, the division in public sentiment, the Declaration came through. It was a great day for the Adams family, that second day of July, the day of agreement. Outraged royalists laid all the odium for this radical triumph on Samuel Adams, pictured as "the foulest, subtlest, and most venomous serpent ever issued from the egg of sedition." He was proud to bear it. Exultant, John Adams wrote his wife in triumphant strain: "Thus was decided the greatest question which was ever debated in America; and a greater perhaps, was never, nor will be, decided among men. The second of July, 1776, will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the greatest anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as a day of deliverance by acts of devotion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward forever more."

These Puritan transports were, however, tempered by a note of pessimism: "You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure that it will cost us to maintain this Declaration. I can see that the end is worth more than all the means. And that posterity will triumph in this day's transaction, even though we should rue it."

It was a daring act of faith on the part of the signers to declare that the thirteen colonies, free and independent, had become the United States of America. Their freedom was still among the things hoped for; their union was, and long continued, imperfect. "Thirteen States with never a hoop will not make a barrel," said one. To Paine was assigned the task of hooping the staves, of gaining



sufficient popular support to convert the faith of the Continental Congress into a substantial reality. This was by no means so easy an undertaking as, seen through the mist of a century and a half of romantic patriotism, it might appear. The Congress of 1776 was nothing more than an assembly of rebels. The sentiment of the country was fairly evenly divided between them and their royalist opponents. It was only by easy stages that the rebels became patriots and the "loyalists" traitors, "the fostering hand of our king" helping the cause along.

Some of the delegates who voted for independence could not take the "United States" seriously. A southern member thought the idea of one big union humorous: "If you agree to the proposition of composing a Congress from the different British colonies, what sort of a dish will you make? New England will throw in fish and onions, the middle states flax seed and flour, Maryland and Virginia tobacco, North Carolina pitch tar and turpentine, South Carolina rice and indigo, and Georgia will sprinkle the whole composition with sawdust. Such an absurd jumble will you make if you attempt to form a union among such discordant materials as the thirteen British provinces."

To which another replied: "I would not choose the gentleman who made the objection for my cook but, nevertheless, I would venture to assert that if the colonies proceed judiciously in the appointment of deputies to a Continental Congress they would prepare a dish fit to be presented to any crowned head in Europe."

Tethered to provincial egotism, it was very doubtful whether the colonies could make the break and take the leap into union. Alone among the influential men of the



time, Paine was entirely free from sectional prejudice, or responsibility to sectional parties; it was he who attempted to tighten the loose continental belt. "Above all I defend the cause of humanity" was his favorite phrase. It was a cause which demanded great sacrifices, but, said he: "Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must like men undergo the fatigues of supporting it." Only a sturdy breed of men could have endured the fatigues.

The clanging of the bells of Philadelphia was the signal for a fusillade of words from both sides. Each, of course, claimed the God of Battles as an ally; each called on God and the world to witness its own exceeding virtue as compared with the scandalous conduct of the other—conduct never before, it was asserted, equaled in the records of the most savage nations of the world. The remembrance of the eulogies so lately showered on the English king brought blushes of shame to rebel cheeks. They explained apologetically that they had been taught from the cradle to believe all the virtues resident in "most sacred majesty . . . as would make us feel conscious of a degree of impiety, in calling a villain by his proper name." Once released from childish inhibitions, they made up generously for lost time. History was raked for characters sufficiently degraded to furnish comparisons for the king, his representatives and generals. Torrents of pathos burst from colonial orators.

"Our tender babes, our beauteous virgins, our virtuous wives," were at the mercy of a foe whose cruelty, unrelieved by one gleam of humanity, had no parallel in history. Time has not withered nor custom staled the perennial freshness of war-time appeals.

The English who maintained a trading post in Detroit, where they carried on a thriving business with the Indians in the scalps of their late fellow subjects, stirred the home people to hysteria by spreading the rumor that the Americans were scalping English soldiers. The American royalists chimed in to this Devil's Chorus with an old familiar lilt. The interest of humanity, they claimed, justified the most extreme measures against the rebels; the more they were made to suffer, the sooner the cruel war would end. Said they: "Every appearance of lenity is actual cruelty." In that benevolent spirit they did their duty, and, always with a discreet regard to their own safety, harried the revolutionists. Rebel guns were spiked, tails cut off the cattle; and when they were emboldened by the proximity of the invading army, still more serious depredations were committed.

Nor did the revolutionists invariably turn the other cheek, though it seems to be generally admitted that milder-mannered men never scuttled a ship. There was some tarring and feathering, some confiscation of property, but comparatively little cruelty as revolutions go. Jefferson treated his prisoners with chivalrous courtesy, and Washington was extremely tolerant of divergent opinions, and magnanimous in his treatment of his royalist neighbors; it was when the overt acts of the royalists became a serious menace to be reckoned with that his temper was strained.

General Burgoyne, however, invited the attention of the rebels to the fact that they had committed atrocities (not specified), "unprecedented in the inquisitions of the Romish church . . . upon the most quiet subjects . . . for the sole crime of having adhered in principle to the

government under which they were born." He invited all to return to their true allegiance, and pictured what would happen to any who directly or indirectly gave aid to those who stubbornly opposed the king's army:

"*In the consciousness of Christianity*, my royal master's clemency, and the honor of soldiership, I have dwelt on this invitation. . . . And let not people be led to disregard it, by considering their distance from the immediate situation of my camp. I have but to give stretch to the Indian forces under my direction . . . to overtake the hardened enemies of Great Britain and America."

The General's invitation to come back and be forgiven brought witty and ribald replies from the colonial officers. Burgoyne apparently saw nothing at all atrocious in turning the savages loose to burn and tomahawk the civilian population. He gave stretch to his Indian forces, but miscalculated their elasticity. Lacking the General's "consciousness of Christianity," the red men were unable to distinguish between royalist and rebel. In their ignorance they lifted a scalp from Miss M'Rae, daughter of a royalist and fiancée of an English officer. The episode caused great excitement in London, although at that moment Colonel Mahwood was warning the rebellious, deluded and blind to their true interests and happiness, that "unless they lay down their arms," he would "arm the Tories, burn and destroy their houses and other property, and reduce them, their *unfortunate wives and children* to beggary and distress."

In reply to this threat, Colonel Hand begs leave to draw Colonel Mahwood's attention to the fact that Mahwood has already bayoneted defenseless prisoners, and introduces the inevitable comparison between that English

officer and Attila, adding with more sound sense: "To wantonly destroy will injure your cause more than ours. It will increase your enemies and our army." It did all that and more; it left a trail of bitter hatred which later proved expensive to England. All of which goes to prove that in a constantly changing world, war is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Thomas Paine meanwhile fought with pen and with sword, the pen being the more effective weapon. Colonial volunteers enlisted on their own terms; they preferred to fight within walking distance of home, a good meal, and a comfortable bed. Considering the condition of the army, it was no more than a natural instinct for self-preservation. To fall fighting gloriously for the ashes of your fathers and the temples of your sires is rather different from petering out by starvation and frost. From the military point of view, however, the idea was not so good, and the Flying Camp was organized to enlist men willing to go where they were needed; Paine joined the Pennsylvania Division. When his enlistment expired he footed it up to Fort Lee to reënlist under the ex-Quaker, General Greene, who made him an aide-de-camp.

We glean from the General's letters that Paine managed to get some diversion in the worst of times: "Common Sense (Thomas Paine) and Colonel Snarl, or Cornwall, are perpetually wrangling about mathematical problems." The men who could thus forget their wretchedness and hardships temporarily were fortunate. A surprise attack soon put an end to these recreations, and the Americans beat a retreat to Newark, New Jersey.

This was a time of incredible anxiety to the commander-in-chief. The country apparently expected the



God of Battles to do the necessary, but Washington, facing superior forces with a raw army, was held responsible for the lack of results. Dipping into contemporary letters and documents, one feels that in addition to the soldier's laurels, George Washington should wear the martyr's crown. His granitelike coldness is a much overworked tale. If he had been as warm as many of his contemporaries, the Revolution would in all probability have boiled over in a fizzle. Benedict Arnold was a warm-tempered gentleman; criticism and colonial friction overheated him to the degree of treason. The same is true of General Charles Lee—favored by Congress to take over the command from Washington—who finally became a turncoat. Neither of these men was cool enough to stand the gaff.

The commander-in-chief had a rather modest opinion of his own ability, which was shared by not a few of his generals. Many were eager to relieve him of responsibility and demonstrate their superior military skill. They freely criticized their chief; General Charles Lee went so far as nonchalantly to ignore his orders, leaving him in the lurch in the most critical moments. With such free and easy behavior on the part of the officers, it is not surprising that the rank and file took soldiering rather lightly; when they got tired of camp life, they dropped out and went home without so much as a by your leave. Washington's army would leak out overnight.

And the public, ignorant of fact, regardless of circumstances, demanded immediate and continual victories. Washington must take his orders from a Congress where many enemies were working against him in the interest of some local military genius burning with a desire to



supplant the chief and perform deeds of renown. Congress, too, clamored for victories, though extremely backward in providing the means to the end. Washington was reputed the richest man in America; for his services to the country he refused to accept compensation, but it went against the grain to be treated with less consideration than he would have shown to one of his own slaves. Still he kept cool, and held the command against all aspirants, confident that none could better fill the place: "I am wearied almost to death with the retrograde motion of things," he wrote privately, "and I solemnly protest that a pecuniary reward of twenty thousand pounds a year would not induce me to undergo what I do; and after all, perhaps to lose my character, as it is impossible under such a variety of distressing circumstances, to conduct matters agreeably to public expectation." The harassment which Generals Lee and Arnold found insupportable were as pin pricks compared to his, and if he had become as overheated by it, his defection had a market value far beyond theirs.

Great was the outcry when the retreat into the Jerseys became public knowledge. Then it was that Paine, on his own initiative, seized pen to defend the chief. Never was there a more glorious retreat, he insisted, "and the names of Washington and Fabius will run parallel to all eternity." As against eight thousand British troops exclusive of artillery and light horse, "our army was at one time less than a thousand effective men and never more than four thousand."

Washington had just managed to sprint out of Newark a gunshot in advance of the pursuing British. It was in the confusion of this retreat that Paine burst out with the

first of his famous *Crisis*: "I had begun the first number of the *Crisis* while on the retreat at Newark, with the design of publishing it in the Jersies, as it was General Washington's intention to have made a stand at Newark, *could he have been timely reinforced*; instead of which nearly half the army left him at that place, or soon after, their time being out."

Washington had depended on the support of the ambitious Englishman, General Charles Lee, but that young man's fancy had lightly turned to thoughts of power, anticipating the time when he should be given the supreme command. Disregarding the orders of his chief, he was roving about the country as the spirit moved him. Washington almost lost his nerve; to an intimate he wrote: "Your imagination can scarce extend to a situation more distressing than mine. Our only dependence now is upon the speedy enlistment of a new army. If this fails I think the game will be pretty well up, as from disaffection and want of spirit and fortitude, the inhabitants, instead of resistance, are offering submission and taking protection from General Howe." With the fortitude of desperation he held on, and it was Paine's self-appointed and unpaid job to rally the soldiery and the disaffected public to his support. By campfire light, on the head of a drum he penned the words of his first *Crisis*, words which even now strike a responsive chord:

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands *now*, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the

more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: 'tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods, and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to tax) but 'to bind us in all cases whatsoever,' and if being *bound in that manner* is not slavery, then there is no such thing as slavery upon the earth. Even the expression is impious, for so unlimited a power can belong only to God. . . .

"But no great deal is lost yet; all that Howe has been doing for this month past is rather a ravage than a conquest. . . . I have as little superstition as any man living, but my secret opinion has ever been, and still is, that God Almighty will not give up a people to military destruction or leave them unsupportedly to perish, who have so earnestly and repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent. Neither have I so much of the infidel in me, as to suppose that He has relinquished the government of this world, and given it up to the care of devils; . . . I cannot see on what grounds the king of Britain can look up to heaven for help against us; a common murderer, a highwayman, or a housebreaker, has as good a pretense as he. . . .

"The whole English army, after ravaging France, was driven back like men petrified with fear; and this brave exploit was performed by a few broken forces collected and headed by a woman, Joan of Arc. . . .

"Panics in some cases . . . produce as much good as hurt. . . . The mind soon grows through them, and ac-

quires a firmer habit than before. . . . They are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy. . . . In fact they have the same effect upon secret traitors, which an imaginary apparition would have upon a private murderer. They sift out the hidden thoughts of man, and hold them up in public to the world. Many a disguised Tory has lately shown his head, that shall penitentially solemnize with curses the day upon which Howe crossed the Delaware."

The responsibility for the whole bad business of the retreat is shifted from Washington and the army to the people themselves, to the lukewarm and disaffected. Why, Paine asks, had Howe invaded the middle States instead of attacking New England? Because he counted on the support of the Tories. But it was their military support and not their opinions about which he was concerned. He would presently discover that they would not fight for their opinions, a prophecy which was fulfilled. On the subject of the Tories, the counter-revolutionists, Paine grows warm; the time had come when they must either be converted or banished, and their property applied to the relief of the suffering patriots.

"The heart that feels not now is dead; the blood of his children will curse his cowardice, who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole, and made THEM happy. I love that man that . . . can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. My own line of reasoning is to myself as straight and clear as a ray of light. Not all the treasures of the world, so far as I believe,



could have induced me to support an offensive war, for I think it murder; but if a thief breaks into my house . . . or threatens 'to bind me in all cases whatsoever,' to his absolute will . . . what signifies it to me whether he does it as a king or a common man . . . whether it be done by an individual or an army of them. . . . I should make a whore of my soul by swearing allegiance to one whose character is that of a sot-tish, stupid, stubborn, worthless, brutish man. I conceive likewise a horrid idea in receiving mercy from a being, who at the last day shall be shrieking to the rocks and mountains to cover him, and fleeing with terror from the orphan, the widow, and the slain of America. There are causes which cannot be overdone with language, and this is one of them. . . . It is the madness of folly to expect mercy from those who have refused to do justice. . . . I bring reason to your ears; and in language as plain as A B C. . . .

"I THANK GOD I FEAR NOT. I see no real cause for fear. I know our situation well, and can see the way out of it. . . . It is a great credit to us, that, with a handful of men, we sustained an orderly retreat for near a hundred miles, brought off our ammunition, all our field pieces, the greatest part of our stores, and had four rivers to pass. . . . Twice we marched back to meet the enemy and remained out till dark. The sign of fear was not seen in our camp, and had not some of the cowardly disaffected inhabitants spread false alarms through the country, the Jerseys had never been ravaged. Once more . . . our new army at both ends of the continent is recruiting fast, and we shall be able to open our new campaign with sixty thousand men well armed and



clothed. This is our situation, and who will may know it. By perseverance and fortitude we shall have the prospect of a glorious issue; by cowardice and submission, the sad choice of a variety of evils—a ravaged country—a depopulated city—habitations without safety, and slavery without hope—our homes turned into barracks and bawdy-houses for Hessians, and a future race to provide for, whose fathers we shall doubt of. Look at this picture and weep over it! and if there yet remain one thoughtless wretch who believes it not, let him suffer unlamented.”

Paine was working on the fears of those whose policy it was to play safe. That the picture he drew was not altogether rhetoric was proved by the conduct of the British troops as they advanced through the Jerseys. As for the army of sixty thousand men, well clothed and well armed, it does not appear that the commander-in-chief was quite so sanguine as his ardent supporter. He was, however, sensible of the value of Paine’s appeal, which was published in the terrible Christmas week of 1776, when the faithful remnant of his famished army shivered in the bitter winter weather. It was a well-nigh hopeless commander who planned to face the enemy at Trenton. “Necessity,” he wrote, “dire necessity will, nay must justify *any* attempt.” Paine’s eloquence could not be converted into loaves and fishes, or into warm underwear, but it lifted the hearts and fired the imaginations of the dispirited men; in the triumph of mind over matter they forgot their physical distress. Washington ordered that the *Crisis* be read to every corporal’s guard in the army; words were all he had to offer his ragged underfed men, but not idle words; they nourished the spirit. The effect was immediate and amazing. This was not the appeal

of a summer soldier or a sunshine patriot, but the call of one born to ride the storm. The army took up the slogan: "These are the times that try men's souls." Despite cold and hunger they faced the enemy at Trenton and came off victorious. Public opinion was carried on the tide of victory; instead of desertions, men were now volunteering to enlist. With the opening of the year 1777, the American Revolution got its second wind.

## *Chapter V*

### P A I N E I S M A D E P R O P A G A N D A G E N E R A L

When I converse with the freest of my neighbors, I perceive that, whatever they may assert about the magnitude and seriousness of the question, and their regard for the public tranquillity, the long and short of the matter is, that they cannot spare the protection of the existing government, and they dread the consequences to their property and families of disobedience to it. —THOREAU.

PURVEYORS of news have made the profitable discovery that to a vast number of the inhabitants of civilized countries, no less than to their savage brothers, pictures talk. They may conceal the truth as effectively as language. Between the time when Washington is pictured in immaculate military attire, against a background of the colors, triumphantly retreating across the Delaware, and that memorable day on which, mounted on a prancing charger, he rode forward to receive the surrender of Lord Cornwallis, much muddy water flowed under many bridges. Intervening events are less stimulating to national pride and do not so readily lend themselves to the pictorial art.

While they cracked grim jokes on the prospect of hanging, the worthy signers were acutely aware that they had embarked on an anxious undertaking. They were going up against the most powerful and warlike nation in the world with an army of agriculturists hastily licked into

shape. Many who believed that independence would some time or other become necessary and inevitable hesitated to sign the Declaration until they were certain of a sustaining public sentiment. John Hancock, who, after the victorious conclusion of the whole matter, plumed himself on his share in the Declaration, was so keen for postponement that Sam Adams raged and fumed among the delegates, and for many years thereafter was unable to speak of or to Hancock civilly.

Patriotic mobs in wild bursts of emotion escorted the effigy of "the bloody Nero of Britain" to the funeral pyre. Washington had scant sympathy with these cheap heroics; he preferred to have the country say it with food and ammunition. Cool, dignified, the pink of propriety as an official, he unburdened himself only to his intimates: "The servant who attends my person and table is indecently and most shamefully naked." The table was equally bare: "We are debarred from the pleasure of good living; which, Sir, (I dare say with me you will concur) to one who has always been used to it, must go somewhat hard to be confined to a little salt provision and water." It may have been at this time, when he was deprived of the generous fare recorded in Mrs. Washington's book of receipts, that the General acquired his taste for New England salt codfish. It was humiliating to entertain French officers when the best hospitality he could offer was "stinking whisky (and not always that) and a bit of beef without vegetables."

The quartermaster-general was the recipient of acidulous letters from headquarters: "Sir, my horses I am told have not had a mouthful of long or short forage for three days. They have eaten up their mangers and are

now (though wanted for immediate use) scarcely able to stand." The soldiers fared little better: "They have often, very often been reduced to the necessity of Eating Salt Porke or beef not for a day, or a week but months together without vegetables, or money to buy them. . . . The soldiers eat every kind of horse food but Hay."

The Congress, "my late masters," as Washington jocularly referred to them after the peace, sidetracked the drudgery of providing the sinews of war by concentrating on the more entertaining job of instructing the commander-in-chief, and assumed direction of the military operations. With no more discernment than the masses, they constantly demanded the impossible without providing the necessary. In his ironical moods, the General with some asperity dammed up the flow of good advice: "I am informed that it is a matter of amazement, and that reflections have been thrown out against this army for not being more active and enterprising than, in the opinion of some, they ought to have been. If the charge is just, the best way to account for it will be to refer you to the returns of our strength, and those which I can produce of the enemy, and to the inclosed abstract of the clothing now wanted for the army. . . .

"I can assure you gentlemen, that it is a much easier and less distressing thing to draw up remonstrances in a comfortable room by a good fireside, than to occupy a cold bleak hill, and sleep under frost and snow, without clothes or blankets. . . . The fortitude—the long and great suffering of this army is unexampled in history." Greatly outnumbered by the well-conditioned forces of the enemy, sometimes as much as five to one, he was obliged to intimate to Congress, none too delicately, that



if they would keep up their end, the military authorities would make shift to do the same.

The Earl of Chatham had impressed the British Parliament by stating: "Mr. Washington who now commands what is called this night the rebel force, is worth £5000 a year." The rebel chief whose wealth and position had impressed his lordship, and whose services were a free gift to the cause, assures his friends that no amount of money would tempt him to undertake his thankless task. Without any assumption of infallibility, he believed himself better fitted for his post than those who were eager to take it from him, and in that belief he quietly stuck to it in spite of all attempts to oust him, patiently sharing the hardships of his men.

It was the recognition of his uncomplaining acceptance of well-nigh unendurable conditions that held Washington's wretched little army together. Yet Congress worried continually about his influence with the rank and file. In 1779 General John Sullivan warned him of the machinations against him in the Congress of which Sullivan was a member: "I speak from certain knowledge. Their plan is to take every method of proving the danger arising from a commander, who enjoys the full and unlimited confidence of his army, and alarm the people with the prospect of imaginary evil; they will endeavor to convert your virtues into arrows, with which they will seek to wound you."

Congress had its knowing eye on the eccentric and blustering General Charles Lee, and was seriously considering as a successor to Washington the man whose warm and impulsive temperament led him finally into treasonable relations with the enemy. The experience of

Washington, who achieved the American Union, and of Grant, who preserved it, were identical; the most galling obstacles to success were interposed not by the enemy, but by ambitious self-assured mediocrity.

Through all the turmoil of the camp and council, Washington had the loyal support of two turncoat Quakers. Impersonal loyalty to a cause is the fundamental essential for putting up a good fight, and in this respect the Quakers have never been surpassed. The Rhode Island Quaker, General Greene, unquestioningly obeyed the orders of his chief, warned him of the cabals against him, and unlike others of his generals was never infected with the itch to supplant him. Thomas Paine with unremitting vigilance recruited public opinion to the support of the military leader, and generaled it like an army officer. The situation must have presented a dilemma to the consciences of both men, for both abhorred war.

Paine was neither an effigy-burning patriot nor a pen-and-ink soldier. As aide to General Greene, he volunteered for the most dangerous service. He asked permission to go with four volunteers in a small boat and fire the British fleet, but the venture was too wild to appeal to General Greene.

To that General had been assigned the duty of guarding the Delaware and the garrisons of Forts Mifflin and Mercer. Conway quotes a letter from Asa Bird Gardner, who specialized on Paine's history, as follows: "The entire British fleet was then brought up against Fort Mifflin, and the most furious cannonade, and most desperate but finally unsuccessful defense of the place was made. The entire works were demolished, and most of the garrison killed and wounded. . . . General Greene being anxious

for the garrison and desirous of knowing its ability to resist sent Mr. Paine to ascertain. He accordingly went to Fort Mercer, and from thence . . . in an open boat to Fort Mifflin, *during the cannonade*, and [was] there when the enemy opened with two gun batteries and a mortar battery. This *very* gallant act shows what a fearless man Mr. Paine was."

From such exciting errands Paine might easily, and with perfect propriety, have been excused. Already in the spring of that year he had been appointed by Congress secretary to the Committee for Foreign Affairs. In addition to these civil and military duties he was, "by the wish of all the generals, wielding his pen." By day he faced the enemy with a gun, and by night when the army turned in for a respite he trained his pen on the public.

Mr. Roosevelt, while admitting that Paine rendered some service to the American cause, accuses him of being "even ignorant of grammar." It is obvious, however, from the testimony of contemporaries that this ignorance proved no handicap to extraordinary usefulness; he used words as bombs. Mr. Roosevelt, with all his popularity, education, and prestige, never so completely held his public in the hollow of his hand. This unknown, "ungrammatical" emigrant created the public morale which supported the Revolutionary fighters.

The Revolution was a war of words, a barrage of proclamations and counter-proclamations. Propaganda letters from England flooded the country, purporting to come from well-wishers of the colonials. The invading generals seem to have imagined that the war was to be won by proclamations rather than by well-planned military offensives. "Your leaders are letting you in for

trouble" was the general tenor of this propaganda; "come back before the worst befalls and all will be forgiven; otherwise it will be our Christian duty to fire your homes and reduce you to beggary." The questions at issue were consistently ignored.

Already property had been destroyed and homes had been burned all over the country; the rebels returned ironical and derisive replies to these kind invitations. Lord North's openly avowed policy to divide and conquer was made ineffective by colonial loyalty, stimulated by the incessant appeals of Thomas Paine. America was by no means an exclusive society of noble souls; there was the usual percentage of selfishness and self-seeking, crooked politicians and wolfish profiteers. There was, however, the necessary quota of determined, far-seeing, and incorruptible men in the lead to put the thing through. Said the aristocratic Gouverneur Morris in retrospect to John Jay: "What a set of damn scoundrels we had in that second Congress." Admitting the worst that can be proven against our forebears, it must be finally acknowledged that they were on the whole impervious to threats, and that bribery proved a much less effective weapon on this side the Atlantic than on the other.

By common consent of the Revolutionary generals, Thomas Paine became the official propagandist, spellbinder-in-chief of the Revolution. Parton, in his *Life of Thomas Jefferson*, declares that his pen, "during the Revolution, was equal to a thousand men in the field." Much of this spellbinding was done in leisure moments when he was not otherwise actively engaged.

*Crisis* No. I was undertaken on his own responsibility



to hearten the suffering army of retreat and to rouse the people out of the general depression. The panic into which the country was thrown by Washington's reverses and the ravages of the British army afforded Lord Howe an opportunity for another proclamation. It was the stereotyped offer of peace and pardon, an encouragement to quit the leaders who were taking the country along the road to ruin.

Paine promptly caught the ball and tossed it back to Lord Howe. Ostensibly addressed to the British General, *Crisis* No. II is clever propaganda intended to quiet the nerves of the despairing colonials. The British victories are minimized; the patriots are urged to redoubled activity and confidence in their leaders; the jubilant Tories are lashed and warned.

Emboldened by British successes, the Tories came out from under cover. To them the figures 1777 symbolized three gallows, and they selected the ringleaders who should be the first to mount them, notably the bloodthirsty Washington. Paine was keenly averse to using the gallows as a political argument, even against the fiercest enemies of the cause. Instead he suggested that these devoted lovers of his Majesty might be much happier if moved nearer to his sacred person. Their property, he hints, would be useful in alleviating the sufferings of those who were staking all for the country.

Perhaps, as one of his countrymen points out, Paine, as an Englishman of "the lower middle class," derived no little satisfaction from pitting his wit against a nobleman.

What's in the name of *lord* that I should fear  
To bring my grievance to the public ear?



This pert quotation prefaces his address to Lord Howe. He then crashes into his lordship's argument that it was the royal prerogative to decide what rights subjects should have. On the contrary, Paine contended, it is the natural right of every people to have a voice in their own affairs. Lord Howe's assumption of authority to treat with the Americans is torn to tatters; his authority was limited to permission to repeat the monotonous offer of royal pardon:

"The character you appear in to us is truly ridiculous. Your friends the Tories, announced your coming with high descriptions of your unlimited powers, but your proclamation has given them the lie, by showing you to be a commissioner without authority. Had your powers been ever so great, they were nothing to us *further than we pleased*; because we had the same right which *other nations* had, to do what we thought best. 'The United States of America' will sound as pompously in the world or in history, as the 'Kingdom of Great Britain'; the character of *General Washington* will fill a page with as much lustre as that of *Lord Howe*: and the *Congress* will have as much right to command the *king and parliament* in London to desist from legislation, as they or you have to command the Congress. Only suppose how laughable such an edict would appear from us, and then, in that merry mood, do but turn the tables upon yourself and see how your proclamation is received here. Having thus placed yourself in a proper position in which you may have a full view of your folly . . . I hold up to you for that purpose, the following quotation from your own lunarian proclamation:

" 'And we, (Lord Howe and General Howe) do com-

mand (and in his majesty's name forsooth) all such persons as are assembled together, under the name of general or provincial congresses, committees, conventions, or other associations, by whatever name or names known and distinguished, to desist and cease from all such treasonable actions and doings.' "

As agent in America of the clumsy diplomacy of his government, Lord Howe's "commands" were couched in the terms best fitted to excite resentment in the most pusillanimous patriot. Carrying out Lord North's scheme to pit the rebel factions against each other, Howe endeavored to make terms with individuals who might be intimidated by threats or won over by a judicious use of bribes. Other than the command to disperse, he entirely ignored the representatives of the people in Congress assembled. By waving what appeared to be an olive branch in one hand, and passing out bribes with the other, it was supposed that the revolutionary party would split. It was a perfectly good plan for a comparatively bloodless conquest, providing the purchasable individuals could be found; lacking these, it fell through. That men never turn rogues without turning fools is a maxim sooner or later universally true, was Paine's indignant comment.

He picked up the fabric of government policy and dropped acid comments over the pattern. His prophecies and his interpretations of events of course favored the rebel cause. Time is the only test of prophecy, and by this test he has proved a better prophet than the English statesmen and warriors. It is only fair to admit, however, that to his faith he added very considerable works.

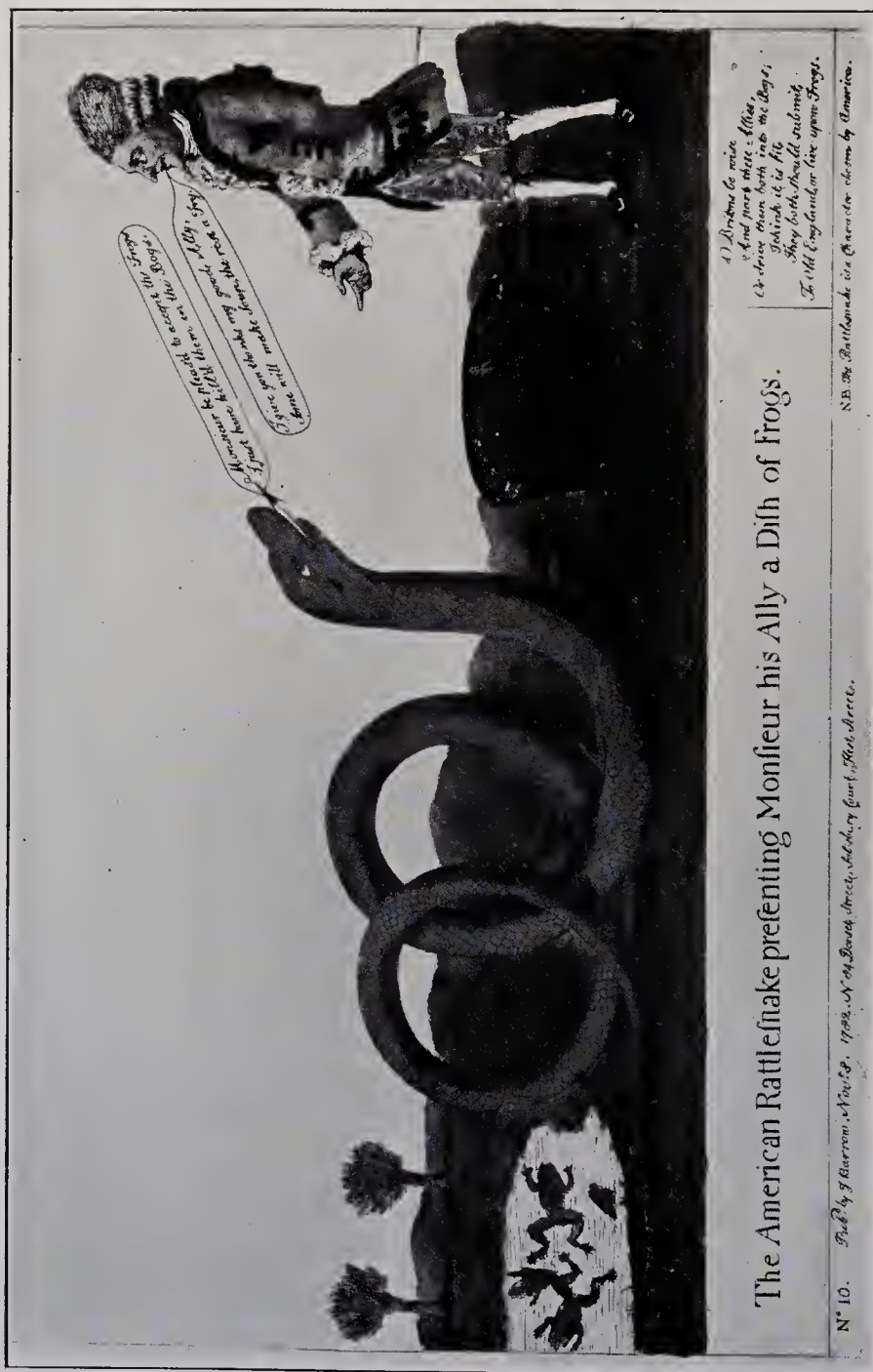
Howe was masquerading as a peacemaker whose benevolent object was to turn the deluded people back from

the road to ruin down which Congress was leading them. Paine's purpose was to tear off his peace mask and to make the people realize that the war was theirs:

"We may justly draw two conclusions," the address to Lord Howe continues: "1st, That you serve a monster; and 2nd, That never was a messenger sent on a more foolish errand than yourself. . . . You say in that hand-bill, 'that they, the Congress, disavowed every purpose of reconciliation, not consonant with their extravagant and inadmissible claim of independence.' Why, God bless me! what have you to do with our independence? We ask no leave of yours to set it up; we ask no money of yours to support it; we can do better without your armies and fleets than with them; you may soon have enough to do to protect yourselves without being burdened with us. . . . Why do you say 'their independence'? . . . Sir, we tell you the independence is ours. . . . The Congress was authorized by every state on the continent to publish it to all the world . . . but only as the heralds that proclaimed it, or the office from which *the sense of the people received a legal form*. . . . It was as much as their heads were worth to have treated with you on the subject of submission under any name whatever. But we know the men in whom we have trusted; can England say the same for their parliament?" This was a question with teeth in it; England was saying anything but complimentary things about her parliament.

Paine then hints to the Tories that their jubilation over his lordship's exploits is premature and indiscreet. Some of that party were honest but misguided, he admitted; many, usually of the wealthier class, were merely playing safe, and he considered their play a poor one.





N<sup>o</sup> 10. Pub. by G Barron, Nov. 18. 1742. N<sup>o</sup> 4 Great Street, Salisbury Court, Fleet Street.

N.B. The Battambang is a Krua for chosen by America.

a) Drinkers be wise  
 & And pass these - Miss,  
 Do drive them both into the Dogs;  
 I think it is fit  
 They both should submit  
 To old England, or live upon Dogs.



Confiscation of property was a game that two could play at: "In a political sense we ought to thank you [Lord Howe] for thus bequeathing estates to the continent. We shall soon at this rate be able to carry on a war without expense, and grow rich by the ill policy of Lord Howe, and the generous defection of the Tories. Had you set foot in this city [Philadelphia] you would have bestowed estates upon us which we never thought of, by bringing forth traitors which we were unwilling to suspect. But these men, you'll say, 'are his majesty's most faithful subjects'; let that honor then be all their fortune; and let his majesty take them to himself."

In the white heat of patriotic passion, in the time of greatest danger, Paine's influence was against violence or the infliction of humiliating punishments on the Tories: "It is time to have done with tarring, feathering, carting, and taking securities for their good behavior; every sensible man must feel a conscious shame at seeing a poor fellow hawked for a show about the streets, when it is known that he is only the tool of some principal villain, biased into his offense by the force of false reasoning or bribed thereto by sad necessity. We dishonor ourselves by attacking such trifling characters while greater ones are suffered to escape; 'tis our duty to find *them* out, and their proper punishment would be to exile them from the continent forever." Paine had a weakness common to enthusiastic reformers; though a mathematician of parts, he invariably miscalculated the number of sensible men in the world.

Intolerant of stupidity in high places, Paine's patience with the lowly, the uninformed, was inexhaustible: "I am not declaring war against every man that appears not

so warm as myself. . . . Some men can brave hardship and the risk of life with a cheerful face, . . . others not; no slavery appears to them so great as the fatigue of arms, and no terror so powerful as personal danger. What can we say? We cannot alter nature, neither ought we to punish the son because the father begot him in a cowardly mood. . . . I believe most men have more courage than they know of, and that a little at first is enough to begin with. I knew the time when I thought the whistling of a cannon ball would have frightened me almost to death; but I have since tried it, and find that I can stand it with as little discomposure, and, I believe with a much easier conscience than your lordship." He understood his audience and played to it; more flies were to be caught with molasses than with vinegar; it was more agreeable to his temperament to coax than to coerce.

In their wanderings through the Jerseys, Howe and his generals had left a trail of arson and plunder. The mere thought of the bonfires of colonial mahogany which warmed the hands of the invaders would chill the heart of an antique-collector. The Tories made their contribution to the general holocaust, which no doubt astonished them as much as it pleased Paine. Since they were so keenly elated by Howe's promise of protection, let them take it as it came, for better or for worse:

"Your avowed purpose here is to kill, plunder, pardon, and enslave: the ravages of your armies through the Jerseys have been marked with as much barbarism as if you had openly professed yourself the prince of ruffians; not even the appearance of humanity has been preserved. . . . The only instance of justice . . . which has distinguished you for impartiality, is, that you have treated

and plundered all alike [royalist and rebel]; what could not be carried away has been destroyed. . . . There was a time when the whigs trusted in your candor, and the tories rested in your favor. . . . [Now] you sleep and rise with the daily curses of thousands upon you. . . . The miseries which the tories have suffered by your proffered mercy may . . . be in the end the best favor you can show them."

Paine's pamphlets were the news sheets of the war; the era of the daily paper had not yet arrived. For the enlightenment of the masses, he repeats to Lord Howe the instructions copied from a general order-book captured from the English at the surprise of Trenton: "His excellency the commander-in-chief orders, that all inhabitants who shall be found with arms, not having an officer with them, shall be immediately taken and hung up." As every colonial, man or boy, could be found with arms, this blanket order delivered the inhabitants over to the mercy of the army.

Such orders inevitably goaded the rebels to reprisals, though it is Lord Acton's opinion that the Americans were characterized by restraint and sobriety beyond all other revolutionists in history. The English commissioners insisted, at the peace conference, that the new government indemnify the Tory counter-revolutionists for the losses they had sustained; they did not suggest indemnifying the noncombatants.

Paine states that his first *Crisis* was written "from a concern that a good cause should be dishonored by the least disunion among us." It was his task to strengthen the union, without which the cause was a hopeless one. The fearful, the wavering, the downhearted must be in-

spirited: "By what means I ask do you expect to conquer America?" he inquires of Lord Howe. "If you could not effect it in the summer, when our army was less than yours, nor in the winter when we had none, how are you to do it? In point of generalship you have been outwitted, and in point of fortitude outdone; your advantages turn out to your loss, and show us that it is in our power to ruin you with gifts. . . . You cannot be so insensible as not to see that . . . we conquer by a drawn game and you lose by it."

Washington had foreseen that Howe must ultimately occupy Philadelphia; he believed it would be imprudent to attempt to dispute that point with him. When Howe finally entered the city, Franklin pithily observed: "Howe has not captured Philadelphia, Philadelphia has captured Howe." He could hold the city only by remaining in it, leaving the continental forces free to wander over the country at will and wear the British down by attrition.

Paine used his knowledge of military plans to soften the coming shock and to make another stab at the British general. He hoped the city would be spared, "not so much from military as from natural motives. 'Tis the hiding-place of women and children, and Lord Howe's proper business is with our *armies*. . . . I laugh at your notion of conquering America. Because you live in a little country where an army might run over the whole in a few days . . . you expected to find the same here . . . but Englishmen always travel for knowledge, and your lordship, I hope, will return, if you return at all, much wiser than you came. . . . By the time you extended from New York to Virginia, you would be reduced to a string



of drops not capable of hanging together; while we by retreating from state to state . . . would acquire strength in the same proportion as you lost it, and in the end be capable of overwhelming you."

Paine frankly explains his propaganda policy: "In publishing these remarks I have several objects in view. On your part they are to expose the folly of your pretended authority as a commissioner; the wickedness of your cause in general; and the impossibility of your conquering us at any rate. On the part of the public my intention is, to show them their true and solid interests; to encourage them to their own good, to remove the fears and falsities which bad men have spread, and weak men have encouraged; and to excite in all men *a love for union*, and a cheerfulness for duty."

The object of English propaganda, on the other hand, was to stir up a fatal dissension among the Americans. Paine adroitly points out that England offered a fertile field for sowing revolutionary propaganda. The seed planted in America, when matured, would be blown across the Atlantic: "I, who know England and the disposition of the people well, am confident, that it is easier for us to effect a revolution there, than you a conquest here; a few men landed in England with the declared design of deposing the present king, bringing his ministers to trial, and setting up the Duke of Gloucester in his stead, would assuredly carry their point, while you were groveling here ignorant of the matter. As I send all my papers to England, this, like *Common Sense*, will find its way there; and though it may put one party on their guard, it will inform the other and the nation in general *of our design to help them*."



The idea was by no means so fantastic as it sounds; Paine got a considerable following in England, and though he never succeeded in dethroning the monarch he despised, he did at a later date stir up the English revolutionary party and cause the government much concern and discomfort.

To destroy his influence with the masses, the Tories spread the rumor that Paine buttered his parsnips by espousing the rebel side, which he publicly denied: "What I write is pure nature, and my pen and soul have ever gone together. My writings I have always given away, reserving only the expense of printing and paper, and sometimes not even that. I never courted either fame or interest, and my manner of life, to those who know it, will justify what I say. My study is to be useful, and if your lordship loves mankind as well as I do, you would, seeing you cannot conquer us, cast about and lend your hand toward accomplishing a peace. Our independence, with God's blessing, we will maintain against all the world; but as we wish to avoid evil ourselves, we wish not to inflict it on others."

Paine, though a dreamer, was most of the time wide awake. Hessian soldiers had been bought with English money. He informs the Americans that in their trade, till now an English monopoly, they possess a purchasing power which might be advantageously used in securing European alliances: "I am not over inquisitive into the secrets of the cabinet"—this to Lord Howe—"but I have a notion, that if you neglect the present opportunity, it will not be in our power to make *a separate peace* with you afterwards; *for whatever treaties or alliances we may form, we shall most faithfully abide by.* Wherefore you

may be deceived, if you think you can make it with us at any time. A lasting and independent peace is my wish and aim, and to accomplish that I pray God the American cause may never be defeated, *and I trust that while they have good officers and are well COMMANDED, AND WILLING TO BE COMMANDED, THEY NEVER WILL BE.*" This was a word in season for the much-criticized commander and his staff.

It was generally recognized that Paine had an unusual knack for putting his ideas across; he became the spokesman for headquarters, and his pen was requisitioned in every crisis by the revolutionary leaders. In every possible key he played up the necessity for absolute independence and the certainty of ultimate victory. The insolence of the government, the righteousness of the rebellion, the appeal for courage and confidence were unceasingly drummed into the ears of the people.

The anniversary of the Battle of Lexington called out *Crisis* No. III. The country was reminded that the first blood had been shed by the king's troopers and was warned not to "embarrass Providence in her good designs" by impatience and a too hasty judgment: "The enemy have long lain idle and amused themselves by carrying on the war by proclamation only. While they continue their delay our strength increases, and were they to move to action now, it is a circumstantial proof that they have no reinforcements coming; wherefore in either case the comparative advantage will be ours. Like a wounded disabled whale, they want only time and room to die in; and though in the agony of their exit, it may be unsafe to live within the flapping of their tail, yet every hour shortens their date and lessens their mischief. . . .

At present I am tired of writing; and as neither the enemy nor the state of politics have *yet* produced anything new, . . . this Crisis . . . will be made up rather of variety than novelty, and consist more of things useful than things wonderful."

It was useful to hold the attention of the public, and still more useful to keep dingling into the ears of the pusillanimous the danger of running with the hounds and the hare. Such a position was contemptible, and time would prove it to be unprofitable. Even in the event of an enemy victory, there was little prospect of a good time coming for anybody; all would be lumped together when the conqueror despoiled the vanquished.

All that man could do had been done to avoid the conflict. "The colonies on their part, *first* denied the right [of being "bound in all cases whatsoever"]; *secondly*, they suspended the use of taxable articles, and petitioned against the practice of taxation: and these failing, they *thirdly*, defended their property by force, as soon as it was forcibly invaded, and in answer to the declaration of rebellion and non-protection, published their declaration of independence and right of self-protection. . . . Either we or Britain are absolutely right or absolutely wrong through the whole.

"Britain like a gamester nearly ruined, hath now put all her losses into one bet, and is playing a desperate game for the total. If she wins it, she wins from *me* my life; she wins the continent as the forfeited property of rebels; the right of taxing those that are left as reduced subjects; and the power of binding them slaves: and the single die which determines this unparalleled event is, whether we support our independence or she overturn it.

Here is the touchstone to try men by. *He that is not a supporter of the independent states of America, in the same degree that his religious and political principles would suffer him to support the government of any other country, of which he called himself a subject, is, in the American sense of the word, a TORY; and the instant that he endeavors to bring his toryism into practice, he becomes a TRAITOR.*"

Some were Tories from principle, others from interest. "Can anything be a greater inducement to a miserly man than the hope of making his mammon safe? And though the scheme be fraught with every character of folly, yet, so long as he supposes that by doing nothing materially criminal against America on the one part, and by expressing his private disapprobation against independence, as a palliative with the enemy on the other, he stands in a safe line with both, while this ground be suffered to remain, craft and the spirit of avarice will point it out, and men will not be found wanting to fill up this most contemptible of all characters."

For the sake of recovering backsliders, he argues on the inevitability of the rupture, the necessity for independence. The royal governors were a kind of genteel spy, indifferent to colonial interests:

"Britain is too jealous of America to govern justly; too ignorant of it to govern well, and far too distant from it to govern it at all. But what weighs most with men of serious reflection are the moral advantages arising from independence; war and desolation have become the trade of the old world; and America neither could, nor can be under the government of Britain without becoming a sharer of her guilt, and a partner of all the dismal com-



merce of death. The spirit of dueling, extended on a national scale, is the proper character for European wars. . . . *The conqueror and conquered are generally ruined alike*, and the chief difference is that one marches home with honors, and the other without them. . . . Surely the Quakers forget their own principles, when in their late Testimony they call *this connexion* with these miserable and military appendages hanging to it, 'the happy constitution.' "

Paine fondly cherished a belief which has survived many disillusionments, the belief in a war to end war. He was canny enough to perceive, however, what all the great statesmen of our own time missed, that war is alike disastrous for victor and vanquished. And since for some centuries back England had spent fifty of every hundred years warring with one power or another, "it certainly ought to be a conscientious as well as a political consideration with America, not to dip her hands in the bloody work of Europe."

Paine's patriotism began at home and ended in the far corners of the world; international reciprocity was his hobby. His revolutionary ardor was intensified rather than weakened by his catholicity, for to him the cause of America was the cause of mankind. The depressing chilliness of mankind as immediately encountered increased his own heat, as a fire burns more brightly on a cold day. Greed, always booted and spurred, made an easy conquest of laziness and fear: "The principal causes why independence has not been so universally supported as it ought, are *fear and indolence*, and the causes why it has been opposed are, avarice, downright villainy, and the lust of personal power." He who determines to shake his fellows



out of apathy and fear is sure of a lasting job; perhaps the most astonishing characteristic of Paine was his abiding faith in his power to do it, his unwavering belief in the essential soundness of the plain people.

It must be kept in mind that Paine was the mouthpiece of the fighting forces. While these forces were suffering the greatest hardships to rid the country of the invader, they were menaced by an insidious foe within. Many were Tories from purely mercenary motives; to secure their property they curried favor with the enemy. Others were perfectly sincere adherents of the aristocratic system, and honestly opposed an insurgency which, if successful, would mean a victory for democracy. It was necessary to reiterate that the rebels had set up a government which was fighting for its existence, and which, like the old one, had the power to reward its friends and punish its foes. These foes had certain strongholds, and Paine insisted on the authority of the central power: "Every attempt now to support the authority of the king and parliament over America is treason against every state; therefore it is impossible that any *one* can pardon or screen from punishment an offender against all. The principle of the Tories is to worship the power they are most afraid of."

Even in that so crucial time, however, there was, barring sporadic outbreaks of mob violence, a spirit of fair play and tolerance. Rather in sorrow than in anger, Paine warns the Tories: "I have generally gone on the charitable supposition that the Tories were a mistaken rather than a criminal people, and have applied argument . . . with all the candor and temper I was capable of . . . if possible to reclaim them from ruin to reason. . . . All we want to shut out is *disaffection*, and, that excluded,

we must accept from each other such duties as we are best fitted to bestow. A narrow system of politics, like a narrow system of religion, is calculated to sour the temper, and be at variance with mankind."

And then the usual tribute to the gallant little remnant of an army, a rebuke to the censorious, who are invited not to criticize the army but to join it: "I never yet knew our brave general, or any part of the army, officers or men, out of heart, and I have seen them in circumstances a thousand times more trying than the present. It is only those that are not in action that feel languor and heaviness, and the best way to rub it off is to turn out and make sure work of it.

"Our army must undoubtedly feel fatigue, and *a want of reinforcement*, though not of valor. . . . You [the Pennsylvanians] ought . . . to spring into action at once. Other states have been invaded, and have likewise driven off the invader. Now our time and turn is come, and perhaps the finished stroke is reserved for us. . . . We fight not to enslave, but to set a country free, and to make room upon the earth for honest men to live in. In such a cause we are sure that we are right; and we leave to you [Howe] the despairing reflection of being the tool of a miserable tyrant."

Many wars waged for the purpose of making the world a more desirable place for honest men to live in have proved singularly advantageous to the dishonest. In fact it does not appear that war has ever brought to mankind those great blessings which enthusiastic propagandists claimed for it. Greed! Fear! Indolence!—The real enemies of mankind cannot be driven out by violence, as Thomas Paine was to discover later on.

## Chapter VI

### Q U A K E R   A G A I N S T   Q U A K E R

Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth.—  
WILLIAM BLAKE.

“**I**F I have anywhere expressed myself over-warmly, 'tis from a fixed, immovable hatred I have, and ever had, to cruel men and cruel measures. I have likewise an aversion to monarchy, as being too debasing to the dignity of man,” Paine wrote. He cherished a sincere affection for his Quaker father, and spoke with profound respect of Quaker principles. Barring the fact that he was violent against violence, he was in spirit a dyed-in-the-wool Quaker. His father had grown up in the strenuous times of Fox and Penn, among a group of the most indefatigable fighters the world has ever seen. When Quakers made a stand on principle they burned their ships behind them; victory or death was their only alternative. The spirit of the fighting martyrs ran in Paine's blood and broke out in his conduct. Violence, cruelty, and injustice he fought with passionate intensity; war was mass murder. Extreme frankness of speech, readiness of tongue, tolerance of honest dissent, magnanimity toward enemies, and unfaltering courage were also inherited Quaker characteristics, and last, but not least, an immovable obstinacy.

It is a significant fact that in his friendships he gravitated toward those who, like himself, had been nurtured

in the principles of Quaker faith. Clio Rickman, his intimate, was a strayed sheep of that fold, as was General Greene, under whom he chose to serve. He repeatedly declared that he respected the Quakers above all others, inasmuch as they were the only Christians who had never tortured their fellows in the name of religion. It was only when the methods of the British government for effecting colonial submission became so raw that even Quakers took the warpath that Paine was converted to belief in physical force. The government refused to discuss differences, burned whole towns, and shot men down on their own land. "It is time for every man to stir," said Paine in fiery indignation. Even then, however, he recognized the right of Quakers to follow the dictates of conscience.

Aunt Cocke's intolerant zeal repelled the boy toward whose salvation it was directed, but he never shook off the influence of his father. To Camille Jordan he wrote: "The only people who, as a professional sect of Christians, provide for the poor of their society, are the people known by the name of Quakers. These men have no priests. They assemble quietly in their places of worship and do not disturb their neighbors with shows and noise of bells. Religion does not unite itself to show and noise. True religion is without either. When there is both there is no true religion."

The mysticism of those hard-fighting saints was another of Paine's inheritances, though it took an oblique line; he might be called a political mystic. The first thirty-seven years of his life had been lived under political and ecclesiastical oppression, which fostered a spirit of rebellion; extreme conservatism is the parent of extreme radicalism. Paine came to America with a sense of



injustice in the background of his consciousness; America was peopled by the disaffected of Europe.

It has been asserted by more than one pundit that the causes of the American rebellion were trivial; an Episcopal clergyman in an American pulpit declared, not long since, that the Declaration of Independence was unnecessary and ungrateful. That statement stretches the hand across the sea too far.

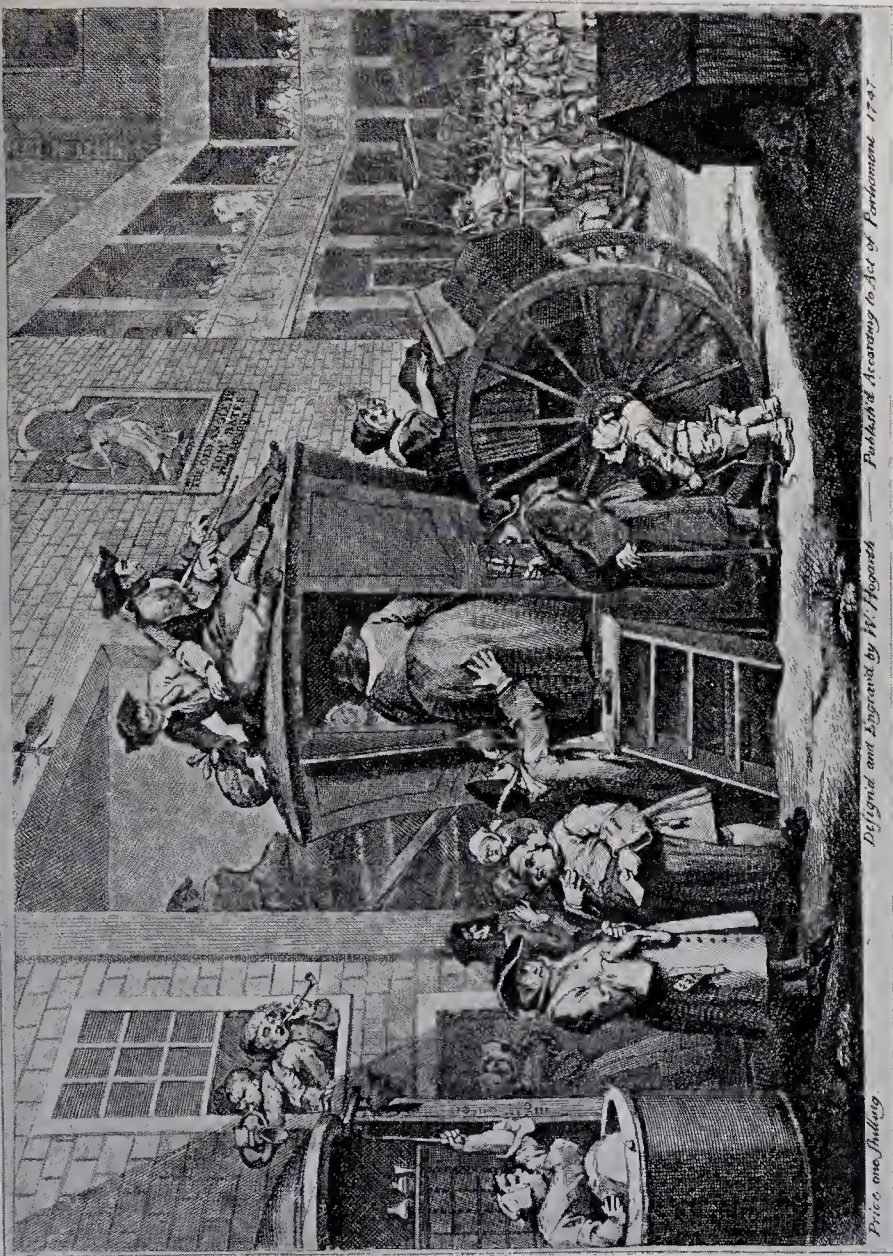
The American Revolution can properly be considered only as a phase of the movement of the oppressed all over the world to get out from under. It had begun when the most robust and adventurous of the rebellious moved across the sea. Before the Declaration was made, a number of North Carolinians had been slain, the Battle of Lexington had enraged the country, towns had been razed by fire, and the colonists had been read out of the protection of the king, whatever that archaic phrase might mean. To English-speaking radicals, George III. became the symbol of their oppression. Yet while resisting parliamentary dictatorship, the colonists were approaching the throne with reverence and godly fear—"whining," as a contemporary characterized it. At this time the people at home were in an extremely ugly mood, using language about the king and his ministry which would have sent cold shivers down the spines of most recalcitrant Americans. The king's obstinate ruthlessness and drastic measures sprang from the well-founded fear that the local disturbance was a symptom of a general disorder. He soon persuaded his colonial subjects that he was no friend of theirs. To Paine, "the royal brute of Britain" was a hoofed and horned monster, the shedder of innocent blood; any sign of forbearance toward the tyrant



marked the extreme boundary line of his toleration.

"I am not the personal enemy of Kings. Quite the contrary. No man wishes more heartily than myself to see them all in the happy and honorable state of private individuals; but I am the avowed, open and intrepid enemy of what is called monarchy; and I am such by principles which nothing can either alter or corrupt—by my attachment to humanity; by the anxiety which I feel within myself for the dignity and honor of the human race; by the disgust which I experience when I observe men directed by children and governed by brutes; by the horror which all the evils that monarchy has spread over the earth excite within my breast. . . ."

We have already quoted Leslie Stephen's admission that Wesley on the one side and Paine on the other influenced the serious thought of the eighteenth century. A fervid nationalist, Wesley's evangelical mission took him over the length and breadth of the land; in Great Britain and Ireland he saw that which distressed and greatly alarmed him. He endeavored to influence the serious thought of the political dictators by assuring them that they were living over an active volcano. A year before Paine emigrated to America, Wesley wrote to Lord North without reserve, in the vain hope of arousing that gentleman to some apprehension of the menacing situation: "I have been East, West, North and South. . . . Trade is exceedingly decayed, and thousands of people are quite unemployed. . . . I aver that the people in general all over the nation are far more deeply dissatisfied than they appear to have been a year or two before the Great Rebellion, and far more *dangerously* dissatisfied. The bulk of the people in every city, town,



OLD ANGEL INN

The inn where Paine wrote his *Rights of Man*, which President Madison thought an able exposition of the principles on which our Republic was founded. But Edmund Burke hinted at the gibbet. (Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum.)





and village where I have been do not so much aim at the ministry, but at the King himself. They heartily despise his majesty, and hate him *with a perfect hatred*. It is . . . sometimes more than I can do," continues the pious and patriotic Wesley, "to keep this plague from infecting my own friends." The king realized that the "insolence" of America would have a bad effect in England: "This contest is the most serious in which any country was ever engaged. This country can never submit."

The conditions described by Wesley, Paine attributed to taxation and trade disturbance caused by unnecessary wars. Transferred from these conditions to Pennsylvania, he found it by comparison an earthly paradise. To his imaginative mind and enthusiastic temperament, the possibilities of the New World appeared unlimited. He had never found a spiritual anchorage in any sect; America became his religion, the hope of mankind for a new and better world. It was the mystical body of America that he worshiped.

Now the "royal brute of Britain" had sent an armed force into the land which was to become the world's redeemer, had refused to treat, and hoping to cow the men by the distress of their women and children, had ordered the burning of towns at the season of the year which would cause the most suffering. Resistance to so cruel a tyranny was obedience to God; Paine enlisted in a holy war. From that time on, whoever obstructed the righteous cause of the American Revolution was the enemy of mankind, a blasphemer, and worse than an infidel.

A revolutionist is the blackest of criminals, denied the meager courtesy shown to a foreign foe. His fate, if he fails, is not pleasant to contemplate, and there are few

libertarians who have not been able to stretch their principles when facing it. The shadow of the gallows is an unfavorable situation for the exercise of the judicial temper.

The middle States were originally Quaker settlements; Pennsylvania, the Jerseys, and Delaware were owned and settled by Quakers, a people pledged to oppose war, holy or otherwise. They had long since made the discovery that all wars put in a claim to holiness, and that sooner or later an unregenerate gentleman of color emerged from the woodpile of propaganda. Their fight, moreover, was for a juster, more humane, more reasonable world, and this they believed was retarded by war hatreds. Consequently the middle States were backward about falling in line with the Revolution.

Paine's *Epistle to the Quakers* was scathing, the more so, perhaps, as there must have been an inner conflict between their principles, in which he believed, and the situation which he faced. To this day, members of the Society of Friends remember and resent his attack. Yet a careful perusal of his writings fails to reveal a single sentence which can be construed into a denial of their right to abide by the dictates of their own consciences.

The *Epistle* was a reply to a "testimony" broadcast by the Society of Friends, in which they declared their fixed policy never to plot, contrive against, or overturn any government, "but to pray for the king, and the safety of our nation, and all good men, that we may live in all godliness and honesty under the government which God is pleased to set over us." So far, so good; Paine had no quarrel with the Friends on that score; they were hard nuts to crack, and he knew better than to expect them



to yield on a fundamental principle. Unfortunately they did not stop there, but urged all "to firmly unite in abhorrence of all such writings and measures, as evidence a desire to break off the happy connection we have hitherto enjoyed with the Kingdom of Great Britain, and our just and necessary subordination to the king, and those who are lawfully placed in authority under him." This was waving the red flag at the bull; it also was violating their principles by taking sides in a political issue. That they had a right to keep out of the fight, Paine never questioned; taking sides with the bear was too much for him. As he saw it, a government pleasing neither to God nor to man was in a fair way to come to an end, and the least the Quakers could do was to keep out of the way and let a fair fight go on to a finish.

The Quaker "testimony" that the connection with Britain had been happy was certainly straining accuracy to the breaking point; they were settled in Pennsylvania because it had been very much otherwise. They might have asserted with more point that hitherto they had had better luck in bringing the throne to their terms than in bringing the New England bigots to see the light. Spiritual freedom was the one and only thing they were willing to fight and die for; this they had achieved at the cost of both life and treasure. The Massachusetts colony, recognized as a leader of the rebellion, was regarded with suspicion by her neighbors. So great was the fear of her belligerent dominance that it was only the splendid statesmanship of the Adamses which smoothed the path of Congress in 1776. With a lively recollection of the entertainment given those of their sect who had ventured into the Puritan stronghold, the Pennsylvania Quakers

would naturally discount promises of liberty with that endorsement.

Moncure Conway, in his admirable if rather biased *Life of Thomas Paine*, makes all his hero's animosities his own; he defends him by maligning the Society of Friends, accusing them of all manner of evil falsely. Of the "testimony" which made Paine see red, he says: "Under this lamb-like tract, and its bleat of texts, was quite discoverable the 'Tory wolf.'"

Conway lumps the Quakers and brands them all as Tories. It would have been strange indeed if, among the many groups in the country, the Quakers alone had been all of one stripe. They, like others, were divided in their sympathies. Harvard College was a hotbed of royalists, while citizens of New York not only published their "wish to live and die the same loyal subjects that we have ever been to his Most sacred Majesty George III.," but whenever possible indulged in overt counter-revolutionary action, and harried those who favored the rebels by every means in their power.

Conway accuses the Quakers of intriguing with the British and of acting as spies. Any individual who gave assistance of any kind whatever, other than impartially to relieve the victims of war, was disowned by the Society. This charge, moreover, is offset by the fact that the British accused the Quakers of being rebels at heart, which many doubtless were. It is true there are on record Quaker professions of loyalty to the government and to the throne; the same were made by Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin. And loyalty is a far step from intrigue.

Letters of advice from influential English Friends define the stand of the Society. To be sure, they caution

the American Friends to be wary of the wild men of the Bay Colony, whose violence they deprecate. But they urge an unyielding resistance to the demands of the Crown, warning the Americans that on their steadfastness to principle and their resistance to unjust usurpation of authority depend not only their own liberties, but those of the English as well.

There is the most convincing evidence that, whatever their repugnance to war, the Quakers on the whole believed that the government was the aggressor. The minutes of the Society show that for every Quaker disowned for favoring the British, twenty were disowned for taking sides with the Revolutionists. John Adams writes his wife from Philadelphia: "My duty to your uncle Quincy. He would burst to see whole companies of armed Quakers in this city in uniforms, going through the manual manoeuvres like regular troops."

Two Quakers withdrew from the Society of Friends and affixed their signatures to the Declaration of Independence. Paine was not alone in anticipating that independence would make for a better world. Old Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island appeared in the Congress, his mild countenance surmounted by a Quaker broad-brimmed hat, under which his mind was agitated by a concern for the slaves, and hopefully put his name to the document.

Joseph Hewes of North Carolina, on whose vote, according to John Adams, "the Unanimity of the States finally depended," became a joiner, though not without a struggle. Hewes had at first some uneasy qualms about the matter, until he was won over by a speech of Samuel

Adams', and "suddenly, lifting both hands to heaven as if in a trance, exclaimed 'It is done, and I abide.' "

Ingrained Quaker fearlessness characterized this same Hewes, who relates the story of a plot to assassinate Washington, blow up the Congress, and so dispose of the rebel leaders with one blow: "A hellish plot has lately been discovered at New York to murder General Washington and some of his officers of the first rank, blow up the magazine and spike the cannon. . . . A paper has been privately laid on the Congress table, importing that some dark designs were framing for our destruction, and advising us to take care of ourselves." Shades of George Fox, and defiance to all intimidation! "Some were for examining the cellars under the room where we sit. I was against it, and urged that we ought to treat such information with contempt, and not to show any mark of fear or jealousy. I told them that I had almost as soon be blown up, as to discover to the world that I thought myself in danger. No notice has been taken of this piece of information, which I think is right."

One swallow doesn't, of course, make a summer, but fearlessness and trust was the rallying cry of the Quakers, and there is abundant evidence to discredit the charge of timidity, which many, including Mr. Roosevelt, have brought against them. "Timid and prosperous," he calls them. Some, no doubt, were; but many of them were about as timid as a lioness with cubs.

Between the hatred of war and the hatred of injustice, some in their dilemma wavered a bit. There is a story of Robert Morris encountering a rich Philadelphia Quaker on the street, who inquired, "Why so downhearted, Friend Morris?" Morris was at the end of his financial



rope; Washington needed fifty thousand dollars, and needed it at once, and said Morris truculently, "You must supply it." A moment of Quaker silence and meditation, and then: "*Thee* shall have it, Friend Morris."

The Quakers were plundered of their goods by both sides, and each accused them of favoring the other. It was a custom of the time, and is still a war-time custom, to forge letters discrediting the adversary. Scandalous letters bearing Washington's name were forged and freely circulated by the British. An alleged transcript of the Spanktown Quaker meeting, highly treasonable from the American point of view, was broadcast. The Quakers pointed out, first, that the alleged minutes were contrary to their principles and procedure, and secondly, that the Spanktown Meeting existed only in the imagination of the forger. Such stories are the inevitable accompaniment of war; they serve their purpose of inflaming public opinion, and unfortunately are seldom interred with the bones of their creators.

The Quaker testimony which roused Paine to a frenzy is an evidence of indiscretion rather than of timidity. The time was ill chosen for taking a glance at the sunny side of the English connection or for extolling the virtue of subordination, a virtue for which the early Friends were not conspicuous. It had now become a life-and-death struggle, for which the king and those in authority under him were chiefly responsible. "If Britain wins," said Paine, "she wins from me my life, and the right to bend the continent to her will"; an extremely disquieting possibility.

The Quakers had fought their own fight with the government, in their own way, and won without violence on



their part. Paine did not ask them to fight his fight in his way: "The writer is one of those few who never dishonors religion by ridiculing or cavilling at any denomination whatever. To God and not to man are all men accountable on the score of religion. Wherefore this Epistle is not addressed to you as a religious body, but as a political, dabbling in matters which the professed quietude of your principles instruct you not to meddle with." Some of the rich and influential Quakers suffered great personal loss and distress in maintaining their pacifist principles; others were as cautious as the same class in New England and New York. Paine's angry attack was directed against those "who, in the very instant that they are exclaiming against the mammon of this world, are nevertheless hunting after it with a step as steady as Time, and an appetite as keen as death." Utterly lacking in acquisitiveness, he was a sorry sympathizer with the fear of material loss. He insisted that every man should support the independent States of America "in the same degree his religious and political opinions would suffer him to support the government of any other country"; not an extreme or unreasonable demand, and one which recognized religious scruples against war.

"But until such time as they can show some real reason, natural, political, or conscientious, on which their objections to independence are founded, we are not obliged to give them credit for being tories [on principle]. . . . O! ye fallen, cringing, priest and Pemberton ridden people! What more can we say of ye than that a religious Quaker is a valuable character, and a political Quaker a real Jesuit."

His most telling argument was the long and futile ef-

forts of the colonists to settle differences amicably, and their pacific character as compared with the English government continually at war: "We fight neither for revenge nor conquest; neither from pride nor passion; we are not insulting the world with our fleets and armies, nor ravaging the globe for plunder. Beneath the shade of our own vine we are attacked; in our houses and on our lands is the violence committed against us. . . . It certainly ought to be a conscientious as well as a political consideration with America, not to dip her hands in the bloody work of Europe . . . yet such have been the irreligious politics of the present leaders of the Quakers, that, for the sake of they scarce know what, they would cut off every hope of such a blessing by tying this continent, like Hector to the chariot wheels of Achilles, to be dragged through all the miseries of endless European wars."

"*Our plan is peace forever,*" he modestly announced to the Quakers. "We act consistently, because, for the sake of introducing an endless and uninterrupted peace, we bear the evils and burdens of the present day." A century and a half later, millions of men bore the evils and burdens of the day in the same high hope; ten millions died in that hope; and an endless peace is not yet in sight.

The Quaker plan, to paraphrase a saying of an eminent statesman of our own time, was to end war by ending it; somebody must make a beginning. Had they yielded to every importunity of the "righteous," they would have been as busily killing off their fellows as the rest of the world. Every war to end war has ended only in disillusioned optimists; yet that battle-cry has always been good for another round. Paine fondly believed that it was

only necessary to rid the world of the specially privileged castes, kings and nobles, to put the freed peoples at the helm of affairs and usher in the era of universal peace and good will. He lived to learn that common sense, common justice, and a forbearing temper were not the monopoly of any class, and were much less common than he had supposed.

Paine's exasperation with the Quakers was no doubt intensified by the fact that he had a strong natural bias toward their beliefs. When in the French Revolution he valiantly risked his own life in a futile effort to prevent the execution of the French king, Marat and Robespierre denounced him as a Quaker, and sneered at him as a "preacher" unfit to sit on a revolutionary tribunal.

Indispensable service was rendered to the Revolution by Paine and by Greene, a Quaker who deserted to the army; it would be interesting to know their final verdict on the efficacy of war in insuring life, liberty, and happiness to men. General Greene was a long-headed Rhode Island Quaker who had foreseen that the government was headed for war and made up his mind to prepare for resistance. He began to study military science, joined the Kentish guards, and was disowned by the Society of Friends as a backslider. When hostilities came to a head, the story goes, the Rhode Island legislature offered the command of the State troops to two men who refused it. Finally it was offered to General Greene, who accepted with the comment: "Since the Episcopalian and the Congregationalist won't, I suppose the Quaker must." It was a fortunate choice, for no officer gave more loyal support to Washington. It was Greene who was sent

down to wear Cornwallis out, preparatory to the attack which decided the war. Yet he seems to have had some difficulty in squaring his career with his conscience: "I am not fit for military life," he wrote; "I CANNOT ACCEPT ITS MAXIMS."

Toward the end Paine may well have had some qualms. The behavior of the free peoples of the world was a disappointment. The French Republic, on which he had built high hopes, imprisoned their Quaker defender, such time as the extremists gained control, and turned the Revolution into an orgy of violence which shocked the world. "A Golgotha," Paine called it, and wandered back to America a broken and disillusioned man, only to be more completely disillusioned; for his adored American Republic, far from becoming the world's redeemer, was torn by internal dissensions; it was a toss-up whether it would go on the rocks. His peaceable Americans were not only spoiling for a fight, but opposing factions were bitterly warring with each other as to whether England or France should be the object of attack; it was a discordant world from which a peace-loving man passed out. He had hardly been laid away before England and America were again cutting each other's throats. The plan of peace forever had completely miscarried; the war to end war was a dismal failure.

We have no means of knowing what bitter reflections filled his mind as his tumultuous life was ending. His faithful friend at the last was a Quaker minister, and it is significant that Paine earnestly desired to lie in peace forever in a Quaker cemetery. His preacher friend did his best to persuade the Society of Friends to grant the dying

man's request, but they were obdurate; they would have none of the prodigal son. It is only a surmise, but not too far-fetched, that his desire to rest at last among the Quakers was a tacit recantation of his belief in the efficacy of violence, an admission perhaps that his faith in holy wars had weakened. Everything brings forth after its kind, it is the law; war has never yet bred peace.



## *Chapter VII*

### THE FRANCO-AMERICAN GRAFT SCANDAL

True fortitude I take to be the quiet possession of a man's self, and an undisturbed doing of his duty, whatever evil beset or danger lies in the way.—LOCKE.

THE great Revolutionary graft scandal began in a stiff fight between Thomas Paine and Silas Deane, in which the whole country finally became involved, supporting one or other of the principals. His biographers have endeavored to prove that Deane was an honorable and much-abused patriot, while Paine's supporters have marshaled facts to prove exactly the contrary. Whoever is interested may read both sides of the controversy and draw his own conclusions.

The root of all the evil was a secret gift of money from the French government to the American rebels. A rankling sense of humiliation disturbed the French government. The day that England's power should be broken in the land from which she had driven her neighbor would be a glorious day for France; she was willing to pay for the pleasure of passing the cup of humiliation to England. Still, though revenge is sweet, prudence is more healthful. Eager to spring at each other, the two countries were at the moment in a state technically known as peace, and war is expensive. While the outlook for the success of the American rebellion was none too bright, an open espousal of the cause was an unnecessary risk, but

in any event a little money judiciously and surreptitiously contributed to the discomfort of England looked like a desirable investment. The French government instructed its American representative, after the peace, that the breaking up of the union would cause it no pain: "We have never pretended to make of America a useful ally; we have had no other object than to deprive Great Britain of that vast continent." This diplomatic strategy was more than successful; it ultimately deprived a French monarch of his crown, and his nobles of life and estates.

The brilliant idea was conceived in the fertile imagination of M. Beaumarchais, author of *The Barber of Seville*, and with none the less ardor inasmuch as, in the secrecy of the negotiations, he saw an opportunity to advance his own as well as his country's interests. M. Beaumarchais belonged to that class, by no means extinct, whose patriotism is greatly intensified by that pleasing combination of interests. In his communications with his government he was frankly cynical; their interest, as he saw it, lay not in the direction of ending the American war, but in continuing "to feed it to the great damage of the English. . . . To sacrifice a million to put England to the expense of a hundred millions is exactly the same as if you advance a million to gain ninety-nine." It is to be observed that in his letter to the King this financial plunger admits that it is the King who is to sacrifice the million.

He goes on to show, however, that the element of sacrifice may be diminished; half the gift would be made in powder from the government stores, which had cost from four to six sols per pound. Charging it up to the rebels at twenty sols per pound would make the sacrifice a genuine

pleasure. To overcome any anxiety the King might have about treaty violation, the patriotic M. Beaumarchais undertook to see the thing through as a commercial transaction under the name of the nonexistent firm of Roderique Hortalez & Co.

Arthur Lee, an agent of the Congress, duly reported to them the generous gift of the King, in return for which American gratitude was to express itself in favorable commercial treaties with their benefactor. Going and coming, there was something in it for France. The envelope inclosing a report of this cheering news contained, when it reached Congress, only a sheet of blank paper; the report presumably had gone to Downing Street, London.

Presently appeared on the scene Silas Deane, agent for the Secret Committee. British Secret Service reports describe him as "vain, desultory, and subtile"—"subtile" in the sense of crafty. He was a native of the wooden nutmeg State, and an adherent of the colonial group to whom government without a monarch was unthinkable. Deane had, in fact, run his eye over those unemployed European royalties who seemed not at all reluctant to leave that part of the world where royalty was a drug on the market, and go west to grow up with the country. One gathers from reading Gouverneur Morris' diary that there was among the royal houses of Europe no overproduction of ability or intelligence for export. Mr. Deane, however, had picked out a safe and sound young German princeling to replace Washington as commander of the army. If he proved satisfactory he would be conveniently at hand when a king should be needed. The Secret Committee discreetly buried Mr. Deane's suggestion in its darkest and

most secret recess, but the ire of the fanatical democrat who served as their secretary—Thomas Paine—can easily be imagined. German royalty, forsooth, the most despotic of the brotherhood; the clan of the execrated George III., to depose General Washington! Paine could never again see Deane but through a mist of red.

Arthur Lee, to whom the offer of financial assistance had been made, fully explained the matter to Deane, but the antagonism between the two agents made teamwork impossible. Beaumarchais had meanwhile developed his plot, in which the million no longer appeared as a gift. Ignoring his fellow countryman and colleague Lee, Deane was closeted with Beaumarchais and Vergennes, the French minister—bad company for an American patriot.

To make a long and unpleasant story as short as possible, the thrifty M. Beaumarchais in due course presented Congress with a bill of indebtedness, in which was included the supposed gift of a million dollars. Mr. Deane endorsed and passed his claim. Meanwhile a duplicate of Lee's missing report reached the Committee, and Mr. Deane was asked to come home and explain matters. He appeared, strangely enough, without papers or vouchers, prepared only to argue the question. In two secret sessions with the Committee his arguments proved unconvincing, and they refused to mill the matter over a third time. Whereupon their indignant agent made his appeal "to the free and Virtuous Citizens of America," representing Congress in a most unfavorable light. The free and virtuous citizens argued the matter in the public press with more fervor and feeling than knowledge.

Paine was very jealous of the honor and dignity of the



insecure Revolutionary government, which at best was shaky on its legs. Without leave or license he took a headlong plunge and publicly denounced Deane's attack, stating that to his personal knowledge the million dollars which, backed by Deane, Beaumarchais was demanding from Congress, was a free gift from the French King. This was supposed to let a state secret out of the bag, though as a matter of fact the secrecy was a diplomatic fiction. In all probability England was informed of the transaction long before it was known in America. At any rate, the object of the secrecy was to ward off trouble between France and England, and the two countries were now at war. Paine's indiscretion could hardly have caused a shellshock.

Nevertheless, the French Minister, Gérard, a stickler for form, indignantly denied every statement made by Paine, and insisted that Congress do the same. Paine was accordingly thrown to the lions. The French archives show that Gérard, to put it simply, was a liar, probably a venal one, for the reports of the British Secret Service hint that his interest in the affair was not altogether official, that with other enterprising patriots he shared in the loot. His own conduct lends color to the suspicion.

It was a nasty rumpus; in vindication of his breach of official etiquette, Paine wrote his friend Henry Laurens, for some time President of Congress: "You will please to observe that I have been exceedingly careful to preserve the honor of Congress in the minds of the people who have been exceedingly fretted by Mr. Deane's address—this will appear the more necessary when I inform you that a proposal has been made for calling a Town meeting to demand justice for Mr. Deane. I have been applied



to smoothly and roughly not to publish this piece. Mr. Deane has likewise been with the printer." The whole country had by this time got into the scrimmage. The situation was complicated by the fact that members of Congress were as much in the dark as the general public; only the Secret Committee had the inside facts of the negotiations between the two countries.

Congress, at the instance of the French Minister, having discredited Paine, was obliged to make a gesture of disapprobation. Its procedure was, to say the least, shady. The matter was discussed behind closed doors; Paine's requests to be allowed to appear in his own defense were ignored. His friend Henry Laurens had resigned as President of Congress, and was succeeded by John Jay. "I cannot," Paine wrote the House, "in duty to my character as a freeman, submit to be censured unheard. I have evidence which I presume will justify me. And I entreat this House to consider how great their reproach will be should it be told that they passed a sentence upon me without hearing me; and that a copy of the charge against me was refused; and likewise how much that reproach will be aggravated should I afterwards prove the censure of this House to be a libel grounded upon a mistake which they refused to inquire into.

"I make my application to the heart of every gentleman in this House, that, before he decides on a point that may affect my reputation, he will duly consider his own. Did I court popular praise I would not send this letter. My wish is that by thus stating my situation to the House, they may not commit an act which they cannot justify. . . .

"I have no favor to ask more than to be candidly and

honorably dealt by; and such being my right, I ought to have no doubt but this House will proceed accordingly." The reference to courting popular praise was an intimation that more popularity could be gained by attacking than by defending Congress.

Again he writes: "I have repeatedly wrote to Congress respecting Mr. Deane's dark incendiary conduct, and offered every information in my power. The opportunities I have had of knowing the state of foreign affairs is greater than that of many gentlemen of this House, and I want no other knowledge to declare that I look upon Mr. Deane to be, what Mr. Carmichael calls him, a 'rascal.' "

Paine was at length summoned before the House and asked if he admitted the authorship of the article signed "Common Sense." "Yes," he answered. It was all he was ever allowed to say for himself. The British spies suspected the French Minister of an extra-official interest in the affair; Paine entertained the suspicion that all was not open and aboveboard in Congress. He wrote rather pointedly to the House: "They began their hard treatment of me while I was defending their injured and insulted honor, and which I cannot account for on any other grounds than supposing that a private and unwarrantable connection was formed between Mr. Deane and certain members of this honorable House."

The only valid charge against Paine was his precipitancy in jumping into a public discussion without official authorization, and revealing a state secret known to him only in his official capacity. "I feel the less difficulty [in making it public]," he defended himself, "because the whole affair respecting those supplies has been in the

hands of the enemy at least twelve months, and consequently the necessity for concealing it is superseded. Besides which, the two nations, viz. France and England, being now come to an open rupture makes the secret unnecessary. It was immediately on the discovery of this affair by the enemy fifteen months ago, that the British ministry began to change their ground and planned what they call their Conciliatory Bills. They got possession of this secret by stealing the dispatches of October, 1777." This was a reference to the envelope from which the report of the American Commission had been removed and blank paper substituted.

The procedure of Congress was not such as to allay Paine's suspicion of an unwarrantable connection with the French graft ring; evidently somebody was interested in keeping an agile feline in the bag, and it looks as though the French minister left Congress holding the bag. The motion for dismissing him was lost by one vote, and Paine cut the knot of dissension by resigning. He was not to be estranged from the cause by personal pique, he told Laurens: "I need not repeat to you the part I have acted or the principle I have acted upon; and perhaps America would feel the less obligation to me, did she know, that it was neither the place nor the people, but the Cause itself that irresistibly engaged me in its support. I have often been obliged to form this distinction to myself by way of smoothing over some disagreeable ingritudes, which, you well know, have been shown to me from a certain quarter."

Once more penniless and jobless, Paine comforted himself in the belief that his loss was the country's gain: "I prevented Deane's fraudulent demand being paid, and so

far the country is obliged to me, but I became the victim of my own integrity." To Robert Morris he wrote: "I hope this man's knack of creating confusion and involving characters in suspicion is at an end."

To Congress he wrote that though he had been condemned unheard, he was still loyal to the cause: "I beg likewise to have it understood that my appeal to this Honorable House for a hearing yesterday was as a *matter of Right* in the character of a Freeman, which Right I ought to yield to no power whatever. I return my utmost thanks to the Honorable members of this House who endeavored to support me in that Right, so sacred to themselves and their constituents; and I have the pleasure of saying and reflecting that as I came into office an honest man, I go out with the same character." And again: "I think it my duty to wait the orders of this Honorable House, at the same time begging leave to assure them that whatever may be their determination respecting me, my disposition to serve in so honorable a cause, and in any character in which I can best do it, will suffer no alteration."

Deane had succeeded in setting the whole country by the ears, judging by an infuriated entry in John Adams' diary: "He appeared to me in the light of a wild boar that ought to be hunted down for the benefit of mankind. I have given him up to Satan to be buffeted. There are certain infallible proofs of vanity, presumption, ambition, avarice, and folly in Mr. Deane as to render him unworthy of confidence." With ladylike restraint, Mrs. Adams is of the same mind with her lord: "The great commotion raised here by Mr. Deane has sunk into contempt for his character; and it would be better for him



to leave a country which is now supposed to have been injured by him. It would be happy for him if he had the art himself. He most certainly had art in the beginning to blow up a flame, and set the whole continent in agitation." Deane took the hint to leave the country, but artfully continued to blow up a flame.

Unless Paine believed that some members of the Committee were shielding Deane to shield themselves, he acted rashly in going it alone. His rashness is extenuated somewhat by the fact that it was Deane who first appealed from Congress direct to the public. Paine, moreover, was not a detached spectator or a sinecured patriot in the times that tried men's souls. He had trudged with the army whose shoeless feet left a trail of blood. With a keen feeling for their dire distress, he could not, unmoved and dispassionate, watch a million dollars trickle into the pockets of unscrupulous plunderers.

The strangest part of the story is that the French Minister, who played the star rôle in Paine's humiliation, immediately sought out the discredited official he had helped to depose, and made a handsome bid for his services as a French propagandist. The assiduity of Moncure Conway unearthed from the French archives Gérard's official report to his government:

"When I denounced to Congress the assertions of M. Payne, I did not conceal from myself the bad effects that might result to a head puffed up by the success of his political writings, and the importance he affected. *I foresaw the loss of his office*, and feared that, separated from the support *which has restrained him*, he would seek only to revenge himself with his characteristic impetuosity and impudence. All means of restraining him would



be impossible, considering the enthusiasm here for license of the press, and in the absence of any laws to repress audacity *even against foreign powers*. The only remedy, my lord, I could imagine to prevent these inconveniences, and *even to profit by the circumstances*, was to have Payne offered a salary in the king's name, in place of that he had lost. He called to thank me, and I stipulated that he should publish nothing on political affairs, nor about Congress, without advising me, and should employ his pen mainly in impressing on the people favorable sentiments towards France and the Alliance, *of the kind fittest to foster hatred and defiance towards England*. He appeared to accept the task with pleasure. I promised him a thousand dollars per annum, to begin from the time of his dismissal by Congress. . . . You know too well the prodigious effects produced by the writings of this famous personage among the people of the States to cause me any fear of your disapproval of my resolution."

Obviously Gérard's offer was not an act of contrition toward the man in whose downfall he had been instrumental; he regarded the capture of his pen as a feather in his diplomatic cap. It is not improbable that his haste to purchase Paine was the result of private rather than of political fear. The two men were incapable of appraising each other's motives. The Frenchman had apparently been less explicit with his supposed captive than with his government; as his meaning became clearer, Paine quietly backed out of an agreement into which, in his somewhat subdued frame of mind, he had eagerly entered.

He had been from the first an ardent advocate of a French alliance, and realizing that his rash disclosures

had upset the French Minister, he was anxious to make amends; but he had no intention of being led on a chain by M. Gérard: "At the time the dispute arose respecting Mr. Deane's affairs, I had a conference with Mr. Gérard at his own request, and some matters on that subject were freely talked over, which it is here necessary to mention. . . . On the evening of the same day or the next, Mr. Gérard through the medium of another gentleman made me a very genteel and profitable offer. My answer to the offer was precisely in these words: 'Any service I can render to either country in the alliance, or to both, I have ever done and shall readily do, and Mr. Gérard's *esteem* will be the only compensation I desire.' " If the last sentence concealed a sarcasm, it was as far as Paine ever went; he aired no dirty linen for the edification of the enemy.

Gérard's next official communication supports Paine's version of the negotiations, though it gives a sinister twist to his motives: "I have the honor to acquaint you with the project I had formed to engage Sir Payne to insert in the public papers paragraphs relative to the alliance, calculated to encourage the high idea formed by the people of the king, and its confidence in his friendship; but the writer *having tarnished his reputation*, and being sold to the opposition, I have found another." His Excellency, having tarnished Paine's reputation, was disappointed in picking up a bargain. To one of his experience and training it was inconceivable that a man in straitened circumstances, and suffering from a sense of injustice, would turn down a good offer unless he had a higher bid.

In the fracas Paine lost his salary, which was small,

but not his occupation, which was varied; the "honorable cause" had always found ample outlet for his superabundant energy. Hitherto his services to the Executive Council of Pennsylvania had been given free. Man cannot live on ideals alone, and in his extremity he was obliged to inform them that he was no longer able to work unremunerated. It seems that the far from disinterested assistance given by the French government evoked the gratitude of the assisted to a degree of truckling. Joseph Reed hesitated to offer Paine paid employment without the approval of Minister Gérard. Replying to Reed, Gérard insinuated that Paine was an untrustworthy and disappointing fellow, but "I willingly leave M. Payne to enjoy whatever advantages he promises himself by his denial of his acceptance of the offers of M. de Mirales and myself. I would even add, Sir, that if you feel able to direct his pen in a way useful to the public welfare—which will perhaps not be difficult to your zeal, talents, and superior lights—I will be the first to applaud the success of an attempt in which I have failed." It was a nasty stab at all concerned, but the irony probably was wasted on the simple-minded Pennsylvanian. Gérard's final complaint against the man who had no mind to pull French chestnuts out of the fire is: "He gives me marks of his friendship, but does not contribute to the success of my exhortations." If Paine had been justly judged guilty of official misconduct, it seems curious that both Gérard and the Pennsylvania Assembly should have been so eager to employ him.

Paine left this troubled world in 1809, but the Deane scandal was still carrying on. Each new ray of light shed on the affair has further vindicated his integrity. Beau-

marchais had also gone to his reward, and his family kept up the fight for Yankee dollars; they were no believers in debt cancellation. In 1812 John Randolph applied to Gouverneur Morris for information about this claim. Morris had been a bitter opponent of Paine at the time of the trouble, but far from expressing any regret for an act of injustice, he takes a fling at the memory of the dead. His letter is a rare revelation of the dubious ways of statecraft:

"The French Court," Morris writes in reply to Randolph, "made (through Mr. Arthur Lee) a tender of military supplies, and employed as their agent for that purpose M. Beaumarchais, who having but little property and but slender standing in society, might (if needful) be disavowed, imprisoned and punished for presuming to use the King's name on such an occasion. In the course of our Revolutionary War, large supplies were sent by M. Beaumarchais under the name of Roderique Hortalez & Co., a supposed mercantile firm. But the operations were impeded by complaints of the British Ambassador, Lord Stormont, which obliged the French Court to make frequent denials, protestations, seizure of goods, and detention of ships. Every step of this kind bound them more strongly to prevent a disclosure of the facts.

"After the late Congress returned to Philadelphia, M. de Francy, agent of M. Beaumarchais, applied to Congress for payment. This application was supported on the ground of justice by many *who were not in the secret*, for Congress had then so much good sense as not to trust itself with its own secrets. There happened unluckily at that time a feud between Mr. Lee and Mr. Deane. The



latter favored (in appearance at least) M. Beaumarchais' claim. Paine, who was clerk of the Secret Committee, took part in the dispute, wrote pieces for the *Gazettes*, and at length, *to overwhelm Deane and those who defended him with confusion*, published a declaration of the facts confidentially communicated to the Committee by Mr. Lee. . . . The French Minister, M. Gérard, immediately made a formal complaint of that publication, and an equally formal denial of what it contained. The Congress was therefore obliged to believe, or at least to act as if they believed, that Paine told a scandalous falsehood. He was in consequence dismissed, which indeed he deserved for his impudence if for nothing else."

Morris was always more charitable toward the peccadillos of his own class than to those of upstart democrats. After paying his spiteful respects to Paine, he proceeds to attack the memory of another of the illustrious dead:

"Dr. Franklin, when he came to settle our national accounts with M. de Vergennes, was less solicitous about a considerable item than he otherwise might have been. He acknowledged as a free gift to the United States the receipt on a certain day of one million livres, for which no evidence was produced. He asked indeed for a voucher to establish the payment, but the Count replied that it was immaterial whether we had received the money or not, seeing that we were not called upon for repayment. With this reassuring the old gentleman seems to have been satisfied. . . . Perhaps the facts may have been communicated to him under the seal of secrecy, and if so he showed firmness in that he shared in the plunder with Deane and Beaumarchais." Considering the weight which Morris threw on the side of Deane in the beginning, a



spirit of humility would have been more becoming than gratuitous reflections on two men who had made much greater sacrifices for the country than he himself.

Paine had the satisfaction of seeing the light gradually break on the bad business: "Your former friend Silas Deane," he wrote from France to a nephew of Benjamin Franklin, "has run his length. In France he is reprobating America, and in America (by letters) he is reprobating France, and advising her to abandon her alliance, relinquish her independence, and once more become subject to Britain. . . . Mr. Robert Morris assured me that he had been totally deceived in Deane, but that he now looked upon him to be a bad man, and his reputation totally ruined. Gouverneur Morris hopped round on one leg, swore they had all been duped, himself among the rest, complimented me on my quick sight—and by God, says he, nothing carries a man through the world like honesty:—and my old friend Duer, 'Sometimes a sloven and sometimes a beau,' says Deane is a damned artful rascal. He received a letter from him . . . of such a traitorous cast, that he communicated it to Mr. Lucerne the Minister."

It is known that Deane associated with English spies, and it is beyond question that the English government found him "useful." Whether his defeatist letters to Americans were prompted by the resentment of vanity and wounded pride or whether he turned traitor for a consideration is difficult to determine. He was visited in London by Benedict Arnold, who sold out his fellow rebels after a quarrel with Congress. Paine had no toleration for Deane, but felt that with fairer treatment Arnold might never have become a traitor, for all men, he argued,

have not the fortitude to rise above injustice. Out of the bitterness of his own experience he mourned over the fall of a soldier who had so bravely distinguished himself.

With more reason for resentment than either of these men, Paine's patriotism was of the enduring kind; his pride and vanity centered in the cause; his shortcomings were those of excess zeal rather than of personal pettiness. He made good his boast that Congressional injustice would not diminish his loyalty. So irrevocably was he dedicated to the cause of American independence that "neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature," could separate him from it.

## Chapter VIII

### WHAT IT COST

Blandishments will not fascinate us, nor will threats of a "halter" intimidate us. For, under God, we are determined that, wheresoever, whensoever, or howsoever we shall be called to make our exit, we will die freemen.—JOSIAH QUINCY.

They never fail who die  
In a great cause; the block may soak their gore,  
Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs  
Be strung to city gates and castle walls,—  
But still their spirit walks abroad. Though  
Years elapse, and others share as dark a doom;  
They but augment the dark and sleepy thoughts  
Which overpower all others, and conduct  
The world at last to freedom.

—LORD BYRON.

WHILE the patriotic Beaumarchais worked out his ingenious system of profitable benevolence, charging up to the struggling rebels the four-sol powder at twenty sols, Heaven had meantime put a very high appraisal on the celestial article of freedom, so high that Congress became skeptical of its ability to pay. The terrorization policy of the English government increased the colonial overhead, but it strengthened a determination to purchase freedom at any price; the fatuous pride of the English ministry was on the whole a Revolutionary asset.

Ultimately, however, military success decides the outcome of war; while emotion may lift the heart and stiffen

the spirit, a hobbled army is not a fast worker. An army moves on its belly, and that anatomical cavity of the army quartered at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-78 was most appallingly empty. Half clad and shivering, they battled with the winter cold.

Congress had a taste of war discomfort when Howe took possession of Philadelphia and drove them out of their comfortable quarters. They retired in much disgust to Baltimore, loudly lamenting the change: "I am horribly vexed with this place," Benjamin Harrison complained. "However, I am told the Yankees are against it *if we go not*, they rule as absolutely as the Grand Turk in his own Dominions." Hooper of North Carolina thought it was about time to let up on the jeers against his State: "With one united voice we ascribe this catalogue of ills to this place. . . . I declare to you the Congress presents a scene of yellow deathlike faces. . . . When you are disposed to abuse *my Carolina*, span every figure of Rhetoric & Compare it to Baltimore."

Mr. Hancock would be grateful if Mr. Morris would spare him a little Madeira: it annoys him not to be able to offer a glass to a friend. Mr. Morris has more to annoy him than a dearth of Madeira. He learns through Colonel Tilghman of the capers the British army is cutting in Philadelphia. "Every house from Mr. Dickinson's to yours is either burnt or what is as bad pulled to pieces. . . . A good deal of Quaker property has shared the fate of the best Whig. This is a kind of proceeding that was not expected from friend Howe. . . . Sam Howell says never were a people so tired of their guests." Wine had not made Mr. Dickinson venturesome; arson, no doubt, stirred him up.

While the northern army was plundering the inhabitants, selling their belongings, burning houses, Cornwallis was keeping the home fires steadily burning in the South. The oath of allegiance was administered under compulsion; men were impressed into the army; those who deserted to their own side were shot on sight. Thomas Jefferson treated the prisoners sent down to Virginia with quixotic chivalry. When Cornwallis' marauding army tore through Virginia, Jefferson made no complaint about the horses and live stock he carried off: it was the fortune of war. But the thorough-going General cut the throats of all the young colts, which seemed to Jefferson unnecessarily malicious. To the third and fourth generation these little frills of military arrogance are remembered with bitter hatred.

Ghastly depredations were committed by the Indian allies of the British. A detachment of General Sullivan's army discovered the remains of some of their own men who had been put to death by vivisection, the flesh cut piecemeal from their bodies, toe and finger nails dug out. The white foe was hardly less savage than the red man; women and children escaped from burning homes to suffer in hideous fear in the wilds. Civilized warfare, like Santa Claus, exists only in the childish imagination. David Ramsay, a British subject, was the chronicler of these atrocities: "As terror was one of the engines by which Great Britain intended to enforce submission of the colonies, nothing could be more conducive to the excitement of this passion." Volunteer scalping parties were organized by Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton and Captain Lamothe and instructed to spare no men, women, or children. "The selfish passions of human nature, un-



restrained by social ties, broke over all the bounds of decency and humanity."

"Details of the devastation of property, of the distress of great numbers who escaped only by fleeing to the woods, where they subsisted, without covering, on the spontaneous productions of the earth, and of the barbarous murders which were committed on persons of every age and sex, would be sufficient," Mr. Ramsay believed, "to freeze every breast with horror."

Captured Americans were not prisoners of war, but rebels; those taken by Howe died like flies in their close quarters, and the dead remained among the living. The abuse of prisoners was a long-drawn-out feud between Washington and Howe. At the battle of Trenton the Americans began to collect prisoners on their own account, and when they were thus in a position to retaliate, Howe was forced to change his tune. Many of the exchanged colonials dropped dead on the way to their own vessels. While the army was working its own sweet will on the helpless, merchants in London were subscribing generously to alleviate the condition of the American prisoners taken to England.

"American sailors, when captured by the British," continues Ramsay, "suffered more than the soldiers which fell into their hands. The former were confined on board prison ships; they were crowded together in such numbers, and their accommodations were so wretched, that diseases broke out and swept them off in a manner that was sufficient to excite compassion in breasts of the least sensibility. It has been asserted on as good evidence as the case will admit that in the last six years of the war eleven thousand persons died on board the Jersey, one of

their prison ships which was stationed in the East River near New York. On many of these the rites of sepulchre were never, or but imperfectly conferred. For some time after the war was ended, their bones lay whitening in the sun on the shores of Long Island."

Ramsay went poking about, recording events as they happened, pestering everybody for accurate information. His history would have been a rare and illuminating record of Anglo-Saxon civilization; he was a careful and conscientious gentleman. Unfortunately it was first shorn to satisfy American sensibilities, and later emasculated by the British publisher. The public pays to have its prejudices confirmed.

However reluctant the country may have been to start, it was now in a dogged mood to make a satisfactory finish. And the outlook was dark and gloomy. Meantime, reënforcements had been sent up to General Gates to enable him to meet Burgoyne with a superior force, for in war the battle is usually to the strong. The surrender at Saratoga sent a thrill through the whole devastated country. Six thousand English prisoners were now in the power of the Americans; English generals were obliged to dismount from the high horse.

In his "Moral Essays," Pope sapiently observes of his fellow humans:

That each from other differs, first confess;  
Next, that he varies from himself no less.

- John Adams occasionally varied from himself; the country was wildly elated by Burgoyne's defeat; Adams was delighted that Washington had not participated in the exploit, although the plan of campaign was his: "One

cause (of thanksgiving) ought to be that the glory of turning the tide of arms is *not immediately* due to the commander-in-chief. . . . If it had idolatry would have been unbounded."

The success of the rebels at Saratoga brought the secret alliance with France into the open; once more she was at war with her ancient foe. England's extremity was France's opportunity, as the Irish would say. Whatever the motives actuating romantic young Frenchmen to cross the ocean and join the fight, their unromantic government eyed the struggle in the cold, clear light of self-interest. So it came about that "the French were on the sea," sailing westward.

"Our common language" was even in that day a favorite theme of sentimental orators, but the warring factions of the English-speaking peoples would have made as much headway by using the Indian sign language. Allowing for wartime exaggeration, the government had given its revolting subjects the third degree; the most barbarous cruelties which an invading army can commit had made the whole country sore, and converted royalists into rebels. Now, in the elation of a great victory, with the French hurrying to their aid, they received fresh overtures from the English government, overtures which would have roused a Quaker to wrath.

With elephantine tact and the cunning of an ostrich the peace commission addressed the country which had been laid waste: "If the honors of a military life are become the objects of the Americans, let them seek these honors under the banners of their rightful sovereign, and in fighting the battles of the united British Empire, against our late and mutual foes." All the circumstances

considered, it must have taken an extremely cool nerve to make this high-handed proposal, but the Ministry was not lacking in nerve. The honors of a military life, indeed! Washington was actually hampered by the American terror of military domination, and to the astigmatic American eye the only foe visible at the moment was the invading army. If the Americans refused to fall in behind and help the army which had ravaged their land to lick the French, they were threatened with worse and more to follow. The maternal country would be under the necessity of making a desert of America, that it might be a worthless possession in the event of its falling into the hands of the French. These threats moved the rebels, but not in the direction indicated by the government.

*Crisis* No. VI was Paine's reply to the gentlemen who, without the flicker of an eyelash, made this cool proposal. After enumerating the atrocities of the English army—atrocities, he declared, of which, like other deluded Englishmen, he had once supposed his countrymen incapable—he tears up the Commission's proposal:

“In the course of your proclamation you say, ‘The policy as well as the *benevolence of Great Britain* have thus far checked the extremes of war, when they tended to distress a people still considered their fellow subjects, and to desolate a country shortly to become again a source of mutual advantage.’ To put a plain question: do you consider yourselves men or devils? You have already equalled, and in many cases excelled the savages of either Indies, and if you have yet a cruelty in store you must have imported it . . . from the original warehouse of hell.”

As for “their rightful sovereign,” that idea had been



completely played out; it had been buried with appropriate ceremonies all over the country. "The less you have to say about him the better. We have done with him. . . . You have been often told so. . . . You go a-begging with your king as with a brat, or with some unsaleable commodity you were tired of; and though everybody tells you no, no, still you keep hawking him about. . . . We are invited to submit to a man who has attempted by every cruelty to destroy us, and to join him in making war with France, who is already at war with him for our support.

"What sort of men or Christians must you suppose the Americans to be, who, after seeing their most humble petitions insultingly rejected; the most grievous laws passed to distress them, in every quarter; an undeclared war let loose upon them, and Indians and Negroes invited to the slaughter; who after seeing their kinsmen murdered, their fellow citizens starved to death in prisons, and their houses and property destroyed and burned: who, . . . after the most solemn abjuration by oath of all government connected with you, and . . . protestations of faith to each other; and who, after soliciting the friendship, and entering into alliance with other nations, should at last break through all these obligations, civil and divine, by complying with your horrid and infernal proposal."

Paine jeers at the idea of "natural enemies"; mutual helpfulness is the natural order among beings deserving the name of human; national enemies, the artificial product of greed and an impious will to power. And before dismissing the subject, he desired to point out to the Commissioners that these anti-social vices were particu-



larly characteristic of the imperial and imperfectly civilized government to which they were inviting submission: "[England's] common language is vulgar and offensive, and children with their milk suck in the rudiments of insult—'The arm of Britain! the mighty arm of Britain! Britain that shakes the earth to its centre and its poles! The scourge of France! The Terror of the world! That governs with a nod, and pours down vengeance like a god!' This language neither makes a nation great or little, but it shows a savageness of manners, and a tendency to keep national animosity alive. . . . Let her therefore reform her manners and do justice, and she will find the idea of a natural enemy to be only a phantom of her own imagination."

Paine was never too busy to make a pass at the patriots who took it out in jingo slogans. National anthems were his particular aversion; he snatched odd moments from his many activities to provide substitutes which rational patriots, if any, might sing without shame. The following, attributed by Conway to Paine, is reminiscent of Pope's "Universal Prayer," and might, if it became popular, improve the manners and morals of patriots:

#### THE AMERICAN PATRIOT'S PRAYER

Parent of all, omnipotent  
 In heaven, and earth below,  
 Through all creation's bounds unspent,  
 Whose streams of goodness flow,

Teach me to know from whence I rose,  
 And unto what designed;  
 No private aims let me propose,  
 Since link'd with human kind.

But chief to hear my country's voice,  
May all my thoughts incline;  
'Tis reason's law, 'tis virtue's choice,  
'Tis nature's call and thine.

Me from fair freedom's sacred cause  
Let nothing e'er divide;  
Grandeur, nor gold, nor vain applause,  
Nor friendship false misguide.

Let me not faction's partial hate  
Pursue to this land's woe;  
Nor grasp the thunder of the state  
To wound a private foe.

If for the right to wish the wrong  
My country shall combine,  
Single to serve the erroneous throng,  
Spight of themselves, be mine.

With a few wise cracks at the passion of obstinacy, Paine leaves the Commission to ponder over their "horrid and infernal" proposal: "Most other passions have their period of fatigue and rest: their suffering and their cure: but obstinacy has no resource, and the first wound is mortal." Finally he applies the usual stimulant to public courage: "You may plan and execute your little mischiefs, but are they worth the expense they cost you? or will such partial evils have any effect on the general cause? Your expedition to Egg Harbor will be felt at a distance like an attack on a henroost, and expose you in Europe with a sort of childish phrenzy. Is it worth while to keep an army to protect you in writing proclamations, or to get once a year into winter quarters? Possessing yourselves of towns is not conquest, but convenience, and in which you will one day or other be trepanned. Your

retreat from Philadelphia was only a timely escape, and your next expedition may be less fortunate.

"It would puzzle all the politicians in the universe to conceive what you stay for. You are prosecuting a war in which you confess you have neither object or hope, and that conquest, could it be effected, would not repay the charges: In the meanwhile, the rest of your affairs are running to ruin, and a European war is kindling against you."

Burgoyne's fiasco at Saratoga was a great and glorious turn of fortune for the Americans. Meanwhile they were much heartened and the English proportionately dismayed by the exploits of a dare-devil personality on the high seas, England's own private preserve. Some are born Jones, others have the name thrust upon them, but John Paul deliberately achieved it. The son of a gardener at Kirkcudbright, Scotland, John Paul was born with an incurable passion for adventure. At twelve he went to sea, and worked up to the position of mate on a slaver. He found he had no stomach for slaving, and falling heir to some property in Virginia, he settled himself there. He was enjoying his good fortune when the wonder-working Lord Dunmore broke loose and razed the little Virginia town of Norfolk, fleeing the wrath to come by taking refuge on a British man-o'-war. Paul Jones had that natural instinct for seamanship which some have for horsemanship; he had an itch to utilize this gift, and started in on a wonder-working career of his own. Making due allowance for legend, the story of his life reads like the tales of the chivalrous pirates of fiction. Indeed, the English soothed their pride by calling him "pirate," and he lives in English history to this day as

"the American pirate." But English sailors sang his exploits in a chantey, "John Paul Jones, the King of All the Seas." The audacious Scotsman ravaged the coasts of his native land, terrorized the English, and brought home to them the realities of war. His performances, however, fell short of the callous cruelties of Lord Dunmore, the non-pirate royal governor of Virginia.

With Paul Jones making life on the high seas very exciting, and Burgoyne's captured army marking time in Virginia under the benevolent supervision of Thomas Jefferson, Paine thought he might be able to bring reason to the ears of his own people, the English:

"The general and successful resistance of America, the conquest of Burgoyne, and a war with France, were treated in parliament as the dreams of . . . a distempered imagination . . . the bare intimation of them afforded the ministry a triumph of laughter. . . . Everything which has been predicted has happened, and all that was promised has failed . . . either you are not able, or heaven is not willing. For, why is it that you have not conquered us? You have had every opportunity that you could desire, and succeeded in your utmost wish in every preparatory means. Your fleets and armies have arrived in America without accident. . . . No foreign nation hath interfered until the time which you had allotted for victory was past. The opposition in or out of parliament, neither disconcerted your measures, retarded or diminished your forces. . . . Every ministerial scheme was carried with as high a hand as if the whole nation had been unanimous. Everything wanted was asked for, and everything asked for was granted."

The colonies, on the other hand, were cut off from

European supplies, without an army or a fleet, without influence in the courts of Europe and without diplomatic experience, and confronted by the task of forming a new government: "Our non-importation scheme had exhausted our stores, and your command by sea intercepted our supplies. Could you possibly wish for a more favorable conjunction of circumstances? Yet all these have happened and passed away, and, as it were, left you with a laugh. . . .

"If anything can be a lesson in presumption, surely the circumstances of this war will have their effect. Had Britain been defeated by any European power, her pride would have drawn consolation from the importance of her conquerors; but in the present case, she is excelled by those she affected to despise.

"Misfortune and experience are lost upon mankind when they produce neither reflection nor reformation. Evils, like poisons, have their uses, and there are diseases which no other remedy can reach. It has been the crime and folly of England to suppose herself invincible, and that, without acknowledging or perceiving that a full third of her strength was drawn from the country she is now at war with. The arm of Britain has been spoken of as the arm of the Almighty, and she has lived of late as if she thought the whole world created for her diversion. Her politics instead of civilizing, has tended to brutalize mankind, and under the vain unmeaning title of 'Defender of the Faith,' she has made war like an Indian against the religion of humanity. Her cruelties in the East-Indies will *never* be forgotten; and it is somewhat remarkable that the produce of that ruined country,



transported to America, should there kindle up a war to punish the destroyer."

Paine was deeply imbued with the Quaker belief in the retributive justice of the overruling power; you sow to the wind and reap the whirlwind, it is the law: "The chain is continued, though with a mysterious uniformity both in the crime and punishment. The latter runs parallel with the former; and time and fate will give it a perfect illustration."

Incitement to hate is one sphere of activity in which all governments in all ages have excelled. War propaganda was a flourishing institution as far back as Revolutionary days; in the best circles in London it was readily believed that the colonials lay in ambush to scalp the peerless soldiers and exemplary Christians who made up the British army: "They tell the tale as told to them and believe it," Paine wrote in the hope of enlightening them, "and accustomed to no other news than their own, they receive it, stripped of all its horrors and prepared for the palate of the nation through the channels of the *London Gazette*. They are made to believe that their generals and armies differ from those of other nations, and have nothing of rudeness or barbarity in them. . . . There was a time when I felt the same prejudices, . . . but sad and painful experience has taught me better. What the conduct of former armies was I know not, but what the conduct of the present is, I well know. It is low, cruel, indolent, and profligate; and had the people of America no other cause for separation than what the army has occasioned, that alone is cause sufficient."

The utter stupidity of war was a theme on which Friend Paine enlarged endlessly. Justifying to himself

his war fervor, he doggedly refused to admit the quarrel over taxation as the cause of the conflict; if that were the case, there would be "no proportion between the object and the charge." The insolence of the government left no doubt of "a secret and fixed determination in the British cabinet to annex America to the Crown of England as a conquered country." As between the peace of the vanquished and a fight to a finish, the latter course was the lesser evil. No price was too great to pay for liberty, but economically war was a stupendous folly. The projectors of the late European tragedy learned only by hindsight what Paine so long ago tried to impress on the English people:

"WAR CAN NEVER BE THE INTEREST OF A TRADING NATION, any more than quarreling can be profitable to a man of business. But to make war with those who trade with us, is like setting a bull-dog upon a customer at the shop-door. The least degree of common sense shows the madness of the latter, and it will apply with the same force of conviction to the former. Piratical nations, having neither commerce or commodities of their own to lose, may make war upon all the world, and lucratively find their account in it." But England can no more carry on the West India trade without the consent of America than the East India trade without the Mediterranean pass. "In whatever light the war with America is considered upon commercial principles, it is evidently to the interest of the *people* of England not to support it; and why it has been supported so long against the clearest demonstrations of truth and national advantage, is to me, and must be to all the reasonable world, a matter of astonishment."

John Paul, alias Jones, was emphasizing Paine's logic, but the people of England had little power, and the government had little sense. It was eight years before the English trading class, with its back to the wall, got a strangle hold on the government and forced a peace.

Still addressing the English, Paine continues: "Perhaps it may be said that I live in America, and write this from interest. To this I reply, that my principle is universal. My attachment is to all the world, and not to any particular part, and if what I advance is right, no matter where or who it comes from." With the utmost suavity he suggests: "We have given the proclamation of your commissioners a currency in our newspapers, and I have no doubt you will give this a place in yours. To oblige and be obliged is fair." Throughout the war Paine did a juggling act with public opinion on both sides the water; his connections in England made him more or less independent of the newspapers.

Living in the tragic experiences of war, Paine was forever hacking away at the hidden causes of what was to him the outstanding horror of mankind: "There is such an idea existing in the world, as that of *national honor*, and this falsely understood, is oftentimes the cause of war. In a Christian and philosophical sense, mankind seems to have stood still at individual civilization, and to retain as nations all the original rudeness of nature. Peace by treaty is only a concession of violence for a reformation of sentiment. It is a substitute for a principle that is wanting, and ever will be wanting till the idea of *national honor* be rightly understood. As individuals we profess ourselves Christians, but as nations we are heathens, Romans and what not. I remember the

late Admiral Saunders declaring in the house of commons, and that in the time of peace, 'That the city of Madrid laid in ashes was not a sufficient atonement for the Spaniard taking off the rudder of an English sloop of war.' I do not ask whether this is Christianity or morality, I ask whether it is decency? whether it is proper language for a nation to use? In private life we call it by the plain name of bullying, and the elevation of rank cannot alter its character. It is, I think, exceedingly easy to define what ought to be understood by national honor; for that which is the best character for an individual is the best character for a nation; and wherever the latter exceeds or falls beneath the former there is a departure from true greatness."

England therefore did not measure up to his standard of national greatness: "Her ideas of national honor seem devoid of that benevolence of heart, that universal expansion of philanthropy, and that triumph over the rage of vulgar prejudice, without which man is inferior to himself, and a companion of common animals. . . . Her idea of national honor seems to consist in national insult, and that to be a great people is to be neither a Christian, a philosopher, or a gentleman, but to threaten with the rudeness of a bear, and to devour with the ferocity of a lion. This may perhaps sound harsh and uncourtly, but it is true, and the more is the pity."

With a few caustic comments on Lord North's incompetence as a financier, which would be brought home to the nation by a steadily increasing taxation, Paine rests his case with the English people. Government proclamations to the Americans stressed the certainty of ruin unless they threw over their leaders. Paine tosses that argu-



ment over the net. Your government is rotten; get rid of it, he urges: "America has set you the example, and you may follow it and be free." Before many years, the example set in America had affected all Europe.

Haranguing the English people had a peculiar fascination for Paine; they were, after all, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone; he had shared their wretchedness and misery, and the scars were on his soul. He never despaired of knocking the prop of public opinion out from under the government.

Whenever the Revolution stalled, good King George usually furnished the starter; he was invaluable to the radical element, as conservatives so frequently are. *Crisis* No. VIII opens with a quotation from the latest royal pronouncement: "Trusting in the divine providence, and in the justice of my cause, I am firmly resolved to prosecute the war with vigor, and to make every exertion in order to compel our enemies to equitable terms of peace and accommodation." Never a proposal to come together or to reason together; that was beneath the dignity of empire.

"To this declaration," replied Paine, "the United States of America and the confederated powers of Europe will reply, *if Britain will have war*, she shall have enough of it." Paine, it is claimed, first used the term, "United States of America." Meanwhile Holland and Spain had been drawn into the whirlpool as well as France; England was not popular with her neighbors. Her self-confidence, however, was unshaken. From an ode written for the installation of Lord North as chancellor of the University of Oxford, Paine salvaged this jewel. "Can Britain fail? Whatever she wills is fate."



For the moment, fate seemed forgetful of her favored child; Britain's pride was rubbed in its tenderest spot, she was whistling to keep her courage up.

It is estimated that the land forces under Washington never exceeded sixty thousand men, while seventy thousand Yankee boys had taken to the seas like ducks to water. Hundreds of English merchantmen were sent to Davy Jones's locker, or were dragged in to be refitted as raiders. The man who had so appropriately assumed the name of Jones was giving an astonishingly good account of himself: "Hitherto," Paine tells the English, "you have experienced the expenses, but nothing of the miseries of war. . . . You were strangers to the distressing scene of a family in flight. . . . To see women and children wandering in the severity of winter, with the broken remains of a well furnished house, and seeking shelter in every crib and hut, were matters that you had no conception of. You knew not what it was to stand by and see your goods chopped for fuel, and your beds ripped to make packages for plunder. The miseries of others, like a tempestuous night, added to the pleasures of your own security. . . . Yet these are but the fainter sufferings of war when compared with carnage and slaughter, the miseries of a military hospital, or a town in flames."

Captain Paul Jones was doing some effective educational work, darting in and out the British coast like lightning, striking shipping and spiking the guns of forts. He visited the stately mansion of the Earl of Selkirk, hoping to entertain his lordship in captivity until the government should agree to an exchange of American prisoners. His lordship, unfortunately for the daring scheme, was not at home. These exploits of Jones on "the

eastern and western coast of England and Scotland, will," said Paine, "by placing you in the condition of an endangered country, read to you a stronger lecture on the calamities of invasion, and bring to your minds a truer picture of promiscuous distress, than the most finished rhetoric can describe or the keenest imagination conceive."

Still, he much preferred reasoning men into taking a stand for civilization to terrorizing them by threats of violence. War is not the means to true national greatness; however successful a warring nation may be, it must ultimately foot the bill for violence: "In addition to this it may be remarked, that men who study any universal science, the principles of which are universally known, or admitted, and applied without distinction to the common benefit of all countries, obtain thereby a greater share of philanthropy than those who only study national arts and improvements. Natural philosophy, mathematics and astronomy, carry the mind from the country to the creation, and give it a fitness suited to the extent. It was not Newton's honor, neither could it be his pride, that he was an Englishman, but that he was a philosopher; the heavens had liberated him from the prejudices of an island, and science had expanded his soul as boundless as his studies." A foolish nationalism was a belittling pride.

Like the English, Paine was whistling to keep up the public courage; his own appears to have been unflagging. The Revolutionary leaders had burned their ships behind them and must go on to the end, but the road was dark. Washington, decorous Virginia gentleman that he was, no doubt had a prejudice in favor of dying under his

own roof, but there must have been moments when hanging looked like a speedy issue out of all his afflictions. From headquarters at Valley Forge he had written to a censorious Congress:

“Without arrogance, or the smallest deviation from the truth, it may be said that no history now extant can furnish an instance of an army suffering such hardships as ours has done, bearing them with the same patience and fortitude. To see men without clothes to cover their nakedness, without blankets to lie on, without shoes (for want of which their marches may be traced by the blood from their feet) and almost as often without provisions as with them, marching through frost and snow, and at Christmas time taking up their winter quarters within a day’s march of the enemy without a house or hut to cover them till they could be built, and submitting without a murmur, is a proof of patience, of obedience, which in my opinion can scarce be paralleled.” He was more reticent about his personal inconveniences, though the neglect of his private concerns while he was serving in the army obliged him to part with some of his land to satisfy the tax collector.

While the army was suffering, the ubiquitous war profiteer, who rivals the poor in his obstinacy of survival, was living in clover and making hay. Mad Anthony Wayne was “fit to be tied.” The families of army officers were in actual want and were eating into their principal while “others are accumulating princely fortunes under their protecting arms, and probably will very shortly look down with contempt on those worthy fellows who have fought and bled and conquered for them.” Many an aristocratic family is founded on shameful

gain. In his disgust, General Wayne would have cleared out bag and baggage and retired to his "Sabine field"; he was restrained only by the fear that others would follow his lead.

Washington, in his well-bred way, was quite as outspoken in his disgust: "The common interests of America are sinking into irretrievable ruin. If I were to be called upon to draw a picture of the times and of men, from what I have seen, heard, and in part know, I should say in one word that idle influence, dissipation and extravagance seem to have laid fast hold upon them; that speculation, peculation, and an insatiable thirst for riches seem to have got the better of every other consideration; that party disputes and personal quarrels are the great business of the day, whilst the momentous concerns of empire, a great and accumulating debt, ruined finances, depreciated money and want of credit, which in its consequences, is want of everything, are all secondary considerations, and postponed from day to day, from week to week, as if our affairs wore the most promising aspect." The inescapable hardships of the war were a challenge to the fortitude of the soldiery; the prosperity of the callous patriot profiteer, an exasperation hardly to be borne.

"He that stands now," Paine had said, "deserves the love and thanks of man and woman," and language, however fervid, was an inadequate expression of it. While he was putting America's situation with its best foot forward, the other was dragging. Hamstrung at Morristown, Washington was in the bitterness of despair:

"The troops, both officers and men, have borne their



Distress; with a patience scarcely to be conceived. Many of the latter have been four or five days without meat and entirely short of bread. . . . Some for their preservation have been compelled to maraud and rob the Inhabitants, and I have it not in my power to punish or reprove the practice. If our condition should not undergo a very speedy and considerable change for the better, it would be difficult to point out all the consequences that may ensue."

Following advices chronicled the consequences; even the heroic patience of the army had a limit, and that limit had been reached. Washington put the situation fairly up to Congress: "I assure you every idea you can form of our distresses will fall short of the reality. There is such a combination of circumstances to exhaust the patience of the soldiery that it begins at length to be worn out, and we see in every line of the army the most serious features of mutiny and sedition."

When that letter was read in Congress, Colonel Laurens, the gallant son of President Laurens, "observed a despairing silence in the House. Nobody spoke for a considerable time. At length a member of whose fortitude I had the highest opinion rose. 'If,' said he, 'the account in that letter is true, and we are in the situation there represented, it appears to me in vain to contend the matter any longer. We may as well give up first as last.' "

The country had ridden its free horse almost to death. Washington could go no further; the exhausted army was down; Congress was a jaded steed. Thomas Paine was as fresh as when the race began. "Charleston is



gone," in his opinion, for "want of a sufficient supply of provisions. The man that does not now feel for the best and noblest cause that ever a country engaged in, and exert himself accordingly, is no longer worthy of a peaceable residence among a people determined to be free."

Paine had been dilatory in withdrawing his salary from the lean treasury; he now promptly collected the arrears. Without an hour's delay he sent five hundred dollars "hard money" and a moving letter to M'Clenaghan. It was read to a convivial group in the coffee house that same evening, and to some purpose; Morris and M'Clenaghan put their names down for fifty thousand dollars each, and others followed with lesser amounts. Almost overnight the subscription swelled to a million and a half dollars. It was this fund that started the Bank of North America, later incorporated by Congress, and supplied the needed funds to Washington.

An old jingle tells how a battle was lost "all for the want of a horseshoe nail." Five hundred dollars thrown into the scales at a fateful moment by an impoverished man turned them in favor of the free and independent United States of America.

This generosity is the more noteworthy as Paine had been shabbily treated by Congress. His enemies have never been able to rise above petty prejudice and ignorance into any such impersonal spirit. Niles published his *Acts of the Revolution* in 1876 to celebrate the centennial of the nation's birth. It records the fulminations of pulpiteers, and contains enough patriotic hot air to warm the surface of the globe. The name of every contributor, and the amounts subscribed to this life-saving emergency

fund, are given. Only the insignificant five hundred dollars which started the ball rolling is omitted. The publication is a voluminous record, but the purity of its page is never once sullied by the name of Thomas Paine. The rancor of the Fundamentalist, like the mercy of God, endureth forever.

## Chapter IX

### STANDING BEFORE KINGS

Some minds seem almost to create themselves, springing up under every disadvantage, and working their solitary but irresistible way through a thousand obstacles.—WASHINGTON IRVING.

Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings.—PROV. 22: 29.

IT was the one absorbing business of Thomas Paine's life to curtail the expanding empire of Britain by separating the American colonies from the dominions of George III. If any other was more diligent in that business, we have no record of his activities. While the men in the field lacked bread, a crust sufficed him. All he possessed, with life thrown in, he was willing to exchange for the life of the Republic.

"America has been fortunate," said Ralph Izard of South Carolina, "in having her cause supported by so able an advocate as Mr. Paine, but it is much to be lamented that she should stand in need of protection from an adopted son, against the assaults of so many of her own unnatural offspring." The patriots who gathered so gleefully for the tar-and-feathering festivities, or who lighted funeral pyres for the effigies of George III., too often dispersed when the collection-plate was passed.

Humiliated by Congress, his livelihood gone, Paine could tighten his belt and face lean times with the satisfying reflection that he had intercepted a million dollars

as it was gliding into the pockets of the graft ring. It was salve to his wounded pride to know that those whose friendship he most prized stood by him. "He was considered as deserving the approbation of his country," Haskell wrote with apparently unconscious irony, "although he was censured by his party for his integrity." Another million and a half was now trickling toward the perishing army, started by his ardent generosity.

Man does not live by bread alone, nor for any considerable length of time without it. Paine's own bread and butter had now become a puzzling problem, not nearly so vexing, however, as the problem of rationing the army. Continuity in the matter of rations was an essential of military success; to insure it, more money was necessary. There was no end of properly printed money in the country, but as a medium of exchange for necessities it was unpopular. The American dollar was worth one cent. Thomas Jefferson as Governor of Virginia drew a salary of £4500; in exchange for a riding saddle he was obliged to part with the whole of that munificent sum. Revolutionary finances had touched bottom; and want of money, as Washington said, was want of everything.

Paine had a naïve belief that "the cause" was all mankind's and his; that a magnanimous chivalry had prompted the French King to contribute financial aid secretly in the early days of uncertainty. Now that the military situation had brightened, why not make a bold bid for a million pounds sterling a year till all was over? He drafted a letter to Vergennes, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, embodying this modest request. It was laid before the French representative in America, who did not warm up to the suggestion. Undaunted, Ralph

Izard submitted the draft of Paine's proposal to Congress, which was desperate enough to catch at any straw of hope. Without delay, Colonel John Laurens, aide to General Washington, and his confidant, was appointed envoy extraordinary to explain the military situation, and on the basis of that, to obtain the necessary financial assistance. A gallant youth was the Colonel; educated abroad, he returned to distinguish himself in the army; by an act of dashing bravery he had saved the life of his chief. He was the son of Henry Laurens, one-time President of the Congress, and Paine's staunch ally in the Deane dispute.

The young Southerner would have preferred to fight rather than to beg; spellbinding was not in his line. Sharing his father's confidence in Paine's loyalty, integrity, and ability, he insisted that he must accompany him on the mission. As secretary to the Foreign Committee Paine had become familiar with the ins and outs of affairs, and the idea, moreover, had originated with him. For many reasons Paine jumped at the offered opportunity; spellbinding was congenial work, and he flattered himself that he was master of the art. Above all, it was a chance to release a bee which for some time back had been buzzing about in his bonnet. An unknown alien, he had converted the whole country to a belief in the principle of independence; why might he not hope for success in putting that great principle across in his own war-weary land, thus ending the atrocity of war? This audacious and dangerous project had already been broached to his old comrade in arms, General Greene:

"Last spring I mentioned to you a wish I had to take a passage for Europe, and endeavor to go privately to



England. You pointed out several difficulties in the way respecting my own safety, which occasioned me to defer the matter at that time, in order not only to weigh it more seriously, but to submit to the government of subsequent circumstances. I have frequently and carefully thought of it since, and were I now to give an opinion on it as a measure to which I was not a party, it would be this: that as the press of that country is free and open, could a person possessed of a knowledge of America, and capable of fixing it in the minds of the people of England, go suddenly from this country to that, and keep himself concealed, he might, were he to manage his knowledge rightly, produce a more general disposition for peace than by any method I can suppose. I see my way so clearly before me in this opinion, that I must be more mistaken than I ever yet was on any political measure, if it fail of its end. . . . I imagine that next spring will begin with a new parliament, which is so material a crisis in the politics of that country that it ought to be attended to by this; for, should it start wrong, we may look forward to six or seven years more of war. The influence of the press, rightly managed, is important; but we can derive no service in this line, because there is no person in England who knows enough of America to treat the subject properly. It was in great measure owing to my bringing a knowledge of England with me to America, that I was enabled to enter deeper into politics, and with more success than other people; and whoever takes the matter up in England must in like manner be possessed of a knowledge of America. I do not suppose that the acknowledgment of Independence is at this time a more unpopular doctrine in England than the declaration of

it was in America immediately before the publication of the pamphlet *Common Sense*, and the ground appears as open for the one now as it did for the other then.

"I would bring such a publication out under the cover of an Englishman who had made the tour of America *incog*. This will afford me all the foundation I wish for and enable me to place matters before them in a light in which they have never yet viewed them. I observe that Mr. Rose in his speech . . . says that 'to form an opinion on the propriety of yielding independence to America requires an accurate knowledge of the state of that country, the temper of the people, the resources of their government,' &c. Now there is no other method to give this information but this,—the channel of the press, which I have ever considered the tongue of the world, and which governs the sentiments of mankind more than anything else that ever did or can exist.

"The simple point I mean to aim at is, to make the acknowledgment of Independence a popular subject, and that not by exposing or attacking their errors, but by stating its advantages and apologizing for their errors, by way of accommodating the measure to their pride. . . . Men who are used to government know the weight and worth of the press, when in hands which can use it to advantage. Perhaps with me a little degree of pride is connected with principle; for, as I had a considerable share in promoting the declaration of Independence in this country, I likewise wish to be a means of promoting the acknowledgment of it in that; and were I not persuaded that the measure I propose would be productive of much essential service, I would not hazard my own safety, as I have everything to apprehend should I fall

into their hands; but could I escape in safety, till I could get out a publication in England, my apprehension would be over, because the manner in which I mean to treat the subject would procure me protection."

That this was an extra-hazardous undertaking nobody will deny, and the author of it suggests that it could be carried through without drawing on the exhausted treasury: "Drop a delegate in Congress at the next election, and apply the pay to defray what I have proposed."

Like most of the men in the field, General Greene could have done with a Congressman less, but Paine's services he valued too highly to give his sanction to this madcap scheme. It was not the first time he had been obliged to put his foot down on Paine's quixotic venturesomeness. When he had begged leave to steal into the British fleet and fire the ships, the General felt that he could be put to other and better uses than hanging from a yardarm; he was of that opinion still. His erstwhile aide, however, nursed the idea of stealing into England to open the eyes of the people to the iniquity and stupidity of their government, though he became more reticent regarding his ambition as an oculist.

Leaving for France, he bade farewell to General Greene:<sup>1</sup> "Congress have appointed Colonel Laurens Envoy Extraordinary to France, and I shall accompany him there as secretary. I am desirous of giving you this information because no endeavors of mine, so far as they extend, will be wanting to show the necessity of a reinforcement of *cash* to the Continent, and troops to the southward.

<sup>1</sup> Letter published for the first time in the new Patriots' edition of Paine's works.

"I leave America with the perfect satisfaction of having been to her an honest, faithful, and affectionate friend, and I go with the hope of returning to spend better and more agreeable days with her than those which are past." Considering the plot incubating in his mind, and the prospect for being captured at sea, it was the hope of optimism. Henry Laurens, father of his companion, had been captured on a similar mission to Holland, and imprisoned in the Tower of London. It is interesting to note in passing that the currents of resistance generated by arrogant privilege in Europe combined in the New World in one powerful current against the ancient foe; the Laurens family were wealthy South Carolinians of Huguenot descent.

The Envoy Extraordinary and his volunteer secretary had the good fortune to land in France instead of in the Tower of London, and their good luck followed them. Washington's impulsive young aide had the temperament for the camp rather than for the court. His indiscretion drew a reprimand from Vergennes, who, however, made generous allowance for his youth and inexperience—he was only twenty-seven. His more experienced secretary was certainly no paragon of discretion, but like many sincere and too outspoken persons, he could rise to the gravity of an occasion. According to Conway, who quotes Lamartine as his authority, "the King loaded Paine with favors." Between them, at any rate, the pair got what they went after, and it is worthy of note that they brought it back, while the supplies charged up by Beaumarchais and Deane usually fell into the hands of the English.

The adventure must have seemed like a fairy tale to



Paine; a few years back he had been a workman out of a job; now he was luring from a great monarch the wherewithal to insure the speedy and safe delivery of a nation in the birth throes, a nation he believed destined by the grace of God and the exaltation of righteousness to become the leader of the world. There was a thrill in success worth the risk of life. Before another decade had passed there was to be a dramatic climax to the story; he was again begging in France with intense ardor—begging this time, at the risk of his own life, for the life of the powerful monarch who was now loading him with favors.

The mission so satisfactorily accomplished, Paine was anxious to slip across the Channel, still obsessed with the idea that he could end the war by persuasion; he had added grounds for belief in his persuasive power. Besides unbounded faith in the common sense of the common people, if only the facts could be fairly presented to them, he had unbounded faith in his own ability to present them; and this all being so, it was his duty, regardless of consequences to himself, to make the attempt. The scheme was too brash, however, to appeal to the prudent Franklin. Even the dashing young Laurens, who had unhesitatingly risked his life to save his commander, disapproved the plan as foolhardy. Poverty, perhaps, rather than sound counsel, decided the issue; for funds were needed to carry out the plan and Paine had none of his own.

The triumphant pair turned homeward under convoy, with one shipload of real money and another of supplies. It was three months before they glided into Boston harbor. Sixteen ox teams were soon plodding along the road



to Philadelphia carrying the French silver. Washington was already getting credit on the strength of the loan, the soldiers were getting regular meals, and the long-thought-out plan for entrapping the plundering Cornwallis was getting under way. General Greene had meanwhile been smoothing the path for success by harrying that high-handed soldier and wearing down his resistance.

On the twenty-fifth of August, Laurens and Paine landed in Boston; three months later almost to a day, Paine relayed the great news to a friend in France:

"Lord Cornwallis with 7247 officers and men are nabbed nicely in the Chesapeake. . . . I think the enemy can hardly hold out another campaign. General Greene has performed wonders to the southward, and our affairs in all quarters have a good appearance." Much less bright in appearance were his own affairs. Young Laurens, impatient to be gone, had shaken the dust of diplomacy from his feet, and dashed off to join his regiment. The heedless youth left the stranded Paine to gather up all loose ends. Paine sent on Colonel Laurens' luggage with a rather reproachful letter:

"I went for your boots the next day after you left town, but they were not done, and I directed the man to bring them to me as soon as finished, but have since seen nothing of him, neither do I wish him to bring them just now, as I must be obliged to borrow the money to pay for them. . . . I expect Colonel Morgan in town on Saturday, who has some money of mine in his hands, and then I shall renew my application to the bootmaker. I wish you had thought of me a little before you went away, and at least endeavored to put matters in a train

that I might not have to experience what is already past."

Paine was embarrassingly hard up; he was aggrieved, and not unreasonably so, to find himself neglected. He had been reared in a society which insisted that every man give unto the Lord freely such service as he had been endowed with ability to render; and believed with equal fervor that the congregation of the faithful should provide the loaves and fishes to sustain him while he performed his service. Paine had made it his first "concern" that the fighters should not lack for daily bread; he was hurt that his own should be left to the uncertain ministrations of the ravens. He had served the cause for seven months in France, and now not a penny was forthcoming. Everybody he met was friendly and flattering; all very gratifying, but flattery paid no board bills. He was proud to beg for the cause, but vexed and humiliated to be obliged to beg for himself. Pride withheld him from appealing to the Congress which had unjustly censured him, and delicacy restrained him from airing his own dire distress and their neglect—he who might have been living in affluence on the enormous profits of *Common Sense* which he had turned over to the Revolutionary treasury. Taking one consideration with another, he felt himself badly used.

Washington was now riding the waves by which he had once been buffeted. Through neglect, ingratitude, and gross injustice, he had come triumphantly on top. Confident of sympathetic understanding, Paine unbosomed himself without reticence to the General:

"Sir: . . . I hope nothing in the perusal of this letter will add a care to the many that employ your mind, but





As Paine's *Common Sense* roused all America, so his *Rights of Man* roused all Europe, from the English and French proletariat to the Empress of Russia. The son of a Quaker workman made a great stir in the world. (Courtesy of Wm. M. Van der Weyde.)



there is a satisfaction in speaking where one can be conceived and understood. I divulge to you the secret of my own situation; because I would wish to tell it to somebody, and as I do not want to make it public, I may not have a fairer opportunity.

“It is seven years *this day*, since I arrived in America, and tho’ I consider them as the most honorary time of my life, they have nevertheless been the most inconvenient and even distressing. From an anxiety to support, as far as lay in my power, the reputation of the Cause of America, as well as the Cause itself, I declined the customary profits which authors are entitled to, and I have always continued to do so; yet I never thought (if I thought at all on the matter) but that as I had dealt generously and honorably by America, she would deal the same by me. But I have experienced the contrary—and it gives me much concern, not only on account of the inconveniences it has occasioned to me, but because it unpleasantly lessens my opinion of the character of a country which once appeared so fair, and it hurts my mind to see her so cold and inattentive to matters which affect her reputation.

“Almost everybody knows, not only in this country but in Europe, that I have been of service to her, and as far as the interest of the heart can carry a man I have shared with her in the worst of her fortunes, yet so confined has been my circumstances that for one summer I was obliged to hire myself as a common clerk to Owen Biddle of this city for my support, but this and many others of like nature I have always endeavored to conceal, because to expose them would only serve to entail the reproach on her of being ungrateful. . . .



“Unfortunately for me, I knew the situation of Silas Deane when no other person knew it, and with an honesty for which I ought to have been thanked, endeavored to prevent his fraud taking place. He has himself proved my opinion right, and the warmest of his advocates now very candidly acknowledge their deception.

“While it was everybody’s fate to suffer I cheerfully suffered with them, but tho’ the object of the country is now nearly established and her circumstances rising into prosperity, I feel myself left in a very unpleasant situation. Yet I am totally at a loss what to attribute it to; for wherever I go I find respect, and everybody I meet treats me with friendship; all join in censuring the neglect and throwing blame on each other, so that their civility disarms me as much as their conduct distresses me. But in this situation I cannot go on, and as I have no inclination to differ with the Country, or to tell the story of her neglect, it is my design to get to Europe. . . . I have literary fame, and I am sure I cannot experience worse fortune than I have here.”

Personal pique never came between Paine and his allegiance: “Besides,” he continues, “a person who understood the affairs of America, and was capable and disposed to do her a kindness, might render her a considerable service in Europe; where her situation is but imperfectly understood, and much misrepresented by the publications which have appeared on that side of the water, and tho’ she has not behaved with any proportionate return of friendship, my wish for her prosperity is in no ways abated, and I shall be very happy to see her character as fair as her cause.

"Yet after all there is something peculiarly hard that the country which ought to have been to me a home has scarcely afforded me an asylum.

"In speaking thus to your Excellency, I know I disclose myself to one who can sympathize with me, for I have often cast a thought at your difficult situation to smooth over the unpleasantness of my own.

"I have begun some remarks on the Abbé Raynal's *History of the Revolution*. In several places he is mistaken, and in others injudicious and sometimes cynical. I believe I shall publish it in America, but my principal view is to publish it in Europe both in French and English."

That America could not afford to lose a man devoted with such singleness of purpose to her interests, none knew better than his Excellency, General Washington. The following document was drafted after a conference, to which one of the parties was Gouverneur Morris, who later jeopardized Paine's life by refusing to maintain his right to American citizenship:

"The subscribers, taking into consideration the important situation of affairs at the present moment, and the propriety and even the necessity of informing the people *and rousing them into action*; considering also the abilities of Mr. Thomas Paine as a writer, and that he has been of considerable utility to the common cause by several of his publications: They are agreed that it will be much for the interest of the United States that Mr. Paine be engaged in their service for the purpose of the above mentioned. They are therefore agreed that Mr. Paine be offered a salary of \$800. per annum, and

that the same be paid him by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. The salary to commence from this day, and to be paid by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs out of monies to be allowed by the Superintendent of Finance for secret service. The subscribers being of the opinion that a salary publicly and avowedly given for the above purpose would injure the effect of Mr. Paine's publications, and subject him to injurious personal reflections.

"ROBT. MORRIS

"ROBT. LIVINGSTON

"GO. WASHINGTON"

It is not unlikely that it might also have subjected to injurious personal reflections those members who had sided with Silas Deane, among whom were both the Morrisises.

Meanwhile Paine's unflagging quill had been scratching on and on. There is no harm in repeating that America was Paine's religion; himself he regarded as the Defender of the Faith, and as such challenged all heretics and skeptics, the Abbé Raynal among others. Politically speaking, the Abbé was not born under a bush; he knew his own government, and was suspicious of others. From the direction of the Franco-American alliance no odor of sanctity assailed his nostrils. The assumption that the French monarch assisted the struggling republic to its feet out of pure altruism, or that he gave one anxious thought to "the happiness of mankind," was to him ludicrous. He saw the alliance simply as a matter of political expediency, and viewed in that light, it ceased to be ludicrous; it was a stupendous blunder. For, argued the Abbé, once firmly established as a nation, America will tread the old beaten path of expediency, cold-

shoulder France, and favor England, for whom, in spite of everything, she still had a sneaking regard—a regard, indeed, which he in some measure shared. Applauding the noble stand of England in resisting the colonies, he is as sentimental about the glory of empire as Paine is about the rights of man: “I know that the annals of the world hold out but rarely the august and majestic spectacle of a nation which chooses rather to renounce its duration than its glory.”

Paine would not quench the smoking flax of the French alliance; his reply to the Abbé is a model of discretion and urbanity. The Abbé is misinformed both as to the causes and as to the events of the Revolution; as an active participant in those events, Paine desires only to set the Frenchman right. Not taxation, but the tyrannical claim of England “to bind in all cases whatsoever” her colonies, was the cause of the disturbance. Then follows a résumé of the struggle. And finally the Abbé is assured that America will never set foot on the blood-stained trail of European diplomacy; “a new era in politics is struck,” a new international etiquette is being prepared.

“Had America dropped quietly from Britain, no material change in sentiment had taken place. The same notions, prejudices, and conceits would have governed in both countries, and they would have travelled on in the same beaten track of vulgar and habitual thinking. But brought about by the means it has been, both to ourselves, to France and England, every corner of the mind is swept of its cobwebs, poison and dust, and made fit for the reception of generous happiness.” The sun of righteousness was rising in the political world, with heal-



ing in his wings, according to Mr. Paine, who occasionally tripped up on his prophecies.

A good cause may sometimes be supported from bad motives, Paine admits, but the unworthy will be shamed and rise above themselves: "Every object a man pursues is, for a time, a kind of mistress to his mind"; either the cause will expand the mind, or the mind will corrupt the cause.

"The rage for conquest has had its fashion, and its day. Why may not the amiable virtues have the same? The Alexanders and Caesars of antiquity have left behind them their monuments of destruction, and are remembered with hatred. . . . Of more use was *one* philosopher, though a heathen, to the world, than all the heathen conquerors that ever existed."

With perfect civility and good will, Paine takes leave of the Abbé: "Should the present revolution be distinguished by opening a new system of extended civilization, it will receive from heaven the highest evidence of approbation; and as this is a subject to which the Abbé's powers are so eminently suited, I recommend it to his attention, with the affection of a friend, and the ardor of a universal citizen."

While Paine was bolstering up the French alliance, well-laid plans were working smoothly to a finish. The sixteen ox teams had safely delivered their precious freight of French silver; General Greene had accomplished all that was expected of him, wearying Cornwallis; and Washington confidently moved south with the combined French and American forces to make an end of the Englishman. It was generally recognized on both sides the Atlantic that the game was up when Corn-



wallis surrendered, though King George still babbled on:

"In the prosecution of this great and important contest in which we are engaged, I retain a firm confidence in the protection of divine providence, and a perfect conviction in the justice of my cause, and I have no doubt, but, that by the concurrence and support of my parliament, by the valor of my fleets and armies, and by a vigorous, animated, and united exertion of the faculties and resources of my people, I shall be able to restore the blessings of a safe and honorable peace to all my dominions."

As for Paine, his hero had triumphed, the cause was safe, and King George as the frustrated villain ceased to be interesting, hardly worth hissing: "The king of England is one of the readiest believers in the world. In the beginning of the contest he passed an act to put America out of the protection of the crown of England, and though providence for seven years together hath put him out of *her* protection, still the man has no doubt. Like Pharaoh on the edge of the Red Sea, he sees not the plunge he is making, and precipitately drives across the flood that is closing over his head."

The English people, like Cornwallis, were wearied out; the waters had already engulfed the King. Already in August, 1782, the English General and Admiral had informed General Washington:

"The resolution of the house of commons, of the 27th of February last, has been placed in your excellency's hands, and intimations given at that time that further pacific measures were likely to follow. . . . A mail is now arrived, sir, by authority, that negotiations for a general peace have already commenced at Paris. . . .

And we are further, sir, made acquainted that his majesty, in order to remove any obstacle to that peace which he so ardently wishes to restore, has commanded his ministers to direct Mr. Grenville, that the independence of the Thirteen United Provinces, should be proposed by him in the first instance, instead of making it a condition of a general treaty."

One last anguished wail from the imperial die-hards, and it was all over. Lord Shelburne wished to God he had been deputed to Congress to plead with them. Independence would be the ruin of both countries. The sun of Great Britain would set when she acknowledged American independence. Paine devotes a *Crisis* to the noble earl's distress, advising him to brace up and be a good loser, for if his premise is correct, England's sun is already set:

"Was America then, the giant of empire, and England only her dwarf in waiting? Is the case so strangely altered, that those who once thought we could not live without them, are now brought to declare that they cannot live without us? Will they tell to the world, and that from their first minister of state, that America is their all in all? Will they who long since threatened to bring us to their feet, bow themselves at ours, and own that without us they are not a nation? Are they become so unqualified to debate on independence, that they have lost all idea of it in themselves, and are calling on the rocks and mountains of America to cover their insignificance? Or, if America is lost, is it manly to sob over it like a child for its rattle, and invite the laughter of the world by declarations of disgrace? Surely, a more consistent line of conduct would be, to bear it without com-

plaint; and to show that England, without America, can preserve her independence, and a suitable rank with other European powers. You were not content while you had her, and to weep for her now is childish."

These were merely the faint reverberations of the thunder; the storm was over. The English ministry had called the war tune; they were now paying the piper with rather bad grace. Their pride had not permitted them to accept proposals for negotiations; they insisted on trial by combat. Providence had umpired the game; Paine was perfectly reconciled to the rulings. His *Crisis* writing days were over; his first had been a *De Profundis*, his last was a *Te Deum*:

"The Times that tried men's souls are over—and the greatest and completest revolution the world ever knew, gloriously and happily accomplished. . . . To see it in our power to make a world happy—to teach mankind the art of being so—to exhibit on the theatre of the universe, a character hitherto unknown—and to have, as it were, a new creation entrusted to our hands, are honors that command reflection, and can neither be too highly estimated, nor too gratefully received. . . .

"Never, I say, had a country so many openings to happiness as this. Her setting out in life, like the rising of a fair morning, was unclouded and promising. Her cause was good. Her principles just and liberal. Her temper serene and firm. Her conduct regulated by the nicest steps, and everything about her wore the mark of honor. It is not every country (perhaps there is not another in the world) that can boast so fair an origin. Even the first settlement of America corresponds with the character of the revolution. Rome, once proud mistress of

the universe, was originally a band of ruffians. Plunder and rapine made her rich, and her oppressions of millions made her great. But America need never be ashamed to tell her birth, nor relate the stages by which she rose to empire. . . .

"The world has seen her great in adversity. . . . Let then the world see that she can bear prosperity; and that her honest virtue in time of peace, is equal to her bravest virtue in time of war. . . . In this situation may she never forget that a fair national reputation is of as much importance as independence.

"It would be a circumstance ever to be lamented and never to be forgotten, were a single blot, from any cause whatever, suffered to fall on a revolution, which to the end of time must be an honor to the age that accomplished it: and which has contributed more to enlighten the world, and diffuse a spirit of freedom and liberality among mankind, than any human event (if this may be called one) that ever preceded it.

"It is not among the least calamities of a long continued war, that it unhinges the mind from those nice sensations which at other times appear so amiable. The continual spectacle of wo, blunts the finer feelings, and the necessity of bearing with the sight, renders it familiar. In like manner, are many of the moral obligations of society weakened, till the custom of acting by necessity becomes an apology, where it is truly a crime. Yet let but a nation conceive rightly of its character, and it will be chastely just in protecting it. None ever began with a fairer than America, and none can be under a greater obligation to preserve it. . . . The world is in her hands. . . .



“But that which must forcibly strike a thoughtful, penetrating mind, and which includes and renders easy all inferior concerns, is THE UNION OF THE STATES. On this, our great national character depends. It is that which gives us importance abroad and security at home. It is through this only, that we are, or can be nationally known in the world, it is the flag of the UNITED STATES, which renders our ships and commerce safe on the seas, or in a foreign port. . . . All our treaties whether of alliance, peace, or commerce, are formed under the sovereignty of the United States, and Europe knows us by no other name or title. . . . Sovereignty must have power to protect all the parts that compose and constitute it; and as the UNITED STATES we are equal to the importance of the title, but otherwise we are not. Our union . . . is the cheapest way of being great— The easiest way of being powerful, and the happiest invention in government which the circumstances of America can admit of— Because it collects from each state, that which, by being inadequate, can be of no use to it, and forms an aggregate that serves for all. . . .

“So far as my endeavors could go, they have all been directed to conciliate the affections, unite the interests, and draw and keep the mind of the country together; and the better to assist in this *foundation work of the revolution*, I have avoided all places of profit or office, either in the state I live in, or in the United States, kept myself at a distance from all parties and party connexions, and even disregarded all private and inferior concerns: and when we take into view the great work which we have gone through, and feel, as we ought to feel, the just importance of it, we shall then see that the little wran-



glings and indecent contentions of personal parley, are as dishonorable to our characters, as they were injurious to our repose.

“It was the great cause of America that made me an author. The force with which it struck my mind, and the dangerous condition the country appeared to me in, by courting an impossible and unnatural reconciliation, with those who were determined to reduce her, instead of striking out into the only line that could cement and save her, A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, made it impossible for me, feeling as I did, to be silent: and if in the course of more than seven years, I have rendered her any service, I have likewise added something to the reputation of literature, by freely and disinterestedly employing it in the great cause of mankind and showing that there may be genius without prostitution.

“Independence always seemed to me practicable and probable; provided the sentiment of the country could be formed and held to the objects: and there is no instance in the world where a people so extended, and wedded to former habits of thinking, and under such a variety of circumstances, were so instantly and effectually pervaded by a turn in politics, as in the case of independence, and who supported their opinion, undiminished, through such a succession of good and ill fortune, till they crowned it with success.

“But as the scenes of war are closed, and every man preparing for home and happier times, I therefore take my leave of the subject. I have most sincerely followed it from beginning to end, and through all its turns and windings: and whatever country I may hereafter be in, I shall always feel an honest pride at the part I have taken

and acted, and a gratitude to nature and providence for putting it in my power to be of some use to mankind."

The makers of America, looking on their work, pronounced it all very good. Thomas Jefferson, the great political boss of his time, Governor of Virginia, and twice President of the United States, omitted to record his political honors on his tombstone, and wished to be known to succeeding generations as the author of the Declaration of Independence, the Virginia statute of religious liberty, and founder of the University of Virginia. Paine swelled with pride and gratitude, remembering the part he had played in the great events. Vanity and ambition were charged against him and against John Adams. Ambition has its uses, and vanity its excuses; deplorable vices in some men, in others character converts them into virtues. Both these men were inordinately ambitious to serve their country; both realized their ambition by great personal sacrifice and peril; both were unquestionably outspoken in the vanity of achievement. Only a surly and envious soul could begrudge them the satisfaction of that innocent indulgence.

Paine's claim to usefulness had the support of the highest authority. The country was now exulting in peace with victory; Washington, for the moment, was monarch of all he surveyed; in the hour of triumph he was not forgetful of the zealous friend of the dark days. From Rocky Hill he wrote Paine:

"I have learned since I have been at this place that you are at Bordentown. Whether for the sake of retirement or economy, I know not. Be it for either, for both, or whatever it may, if you will come to this place and

partake with me, I shall be exceedingly happy to see you.

“Your presence may remind Congress of your past services to this country; and if it is in my power to impress them, command my best services with freedom, as they will be rendered cheerfully by one who entertains a lively sense of the importance of your works, and who, with much pleasure, subscribes himself,

“Your sincere friend,

“G. WASHINGTON.”

“Your sincere friend” was not a convention with Washington, who was very punctilious about such forms. The relations between the two men had been of the friendliest. The General had broken bread with Paine, sometimes, when there was little but bread to break. In the time when an overcoat was a priceless possession, a shiftless Irishman made off with one belonging to Paine. General Washington insisted that as he had two, Paine must take one. The General was extremely fastidious and conservative, with profound respect for the conventions and proprieties; Martha, his wife, no less so. His invitation to Paine should for all time discredit the legend that he was a drunken sloven.

Washington did not stop at a cheerful tender of his services; with a lively sense of the importance of Paine's work, he persistently and effectively bestirred himself to obtain a substantial recognition by the authorities:

“Mount Vernon, 12 June.

“Unsolicited by, and unknown to Mr. Paine, I take the liberty of hinting the services and distressed (for so I think it may be called) situation of that Gentleman.

“That his *Common Sense*, and many of his *Crisis*, were

well timed and had a happy effect upon the public mind, none, I believe, who will recur to the epochas at which they were published will deny.—That his services hitherto have passed off unnoticed is obvious to all;—and that he is chagreened and necessitous I will undertake to aver.—Does not common justice then point to some compensation?

“He is not in circumstances to refuse the bounty of the public. New York, not the least distressed, nor the most able state in the Union, has set the example. He prefers the benevolence of the States individually to an allowance from Congress, for reasons which are conclusive to his own mind, and such as I think may be approved by others. His views are moderate, a decent independency is, I believe, the height of his ambition, and if you view his services in the American cause in the same important light that I do, I am sure you will have pleasure in obtaining it for him.” Versions of this letter were sent to many of the influential leaders of the country.

The profits of *Common Sense* had been turned over to the general treasury in the time of acute need, and Paine had never been remunerated for his long service in France. He had been content with a bare subsistence while the country was in a tight place; now that it had come into smooth and prosperous times, he not unreasonably felt it should square up its indebtedness. New York was the first State to recognize its obligation with a gift of several hundred acres of land and a fine mansion; it was too fine for Paine’s simple habits, and preferring the old haunts and the old congenial friends at Bordentown, he seldom occupied it.

Washington’s appeal was turned down in his own



State. In the *Crisis* quoted above, it will be seen that even in the dawn of the fair morning Paine had observed a cloud which caused him anxiety—the mad scramble for preëminence in the States. Little Rhode Island had determined to go her own gait, heedless of the Union; Virginia laid claim to an immense territory in the West. An uncompromising union man, Paine argued down Virginia's claim in a pamphlet, *Public Good*. With the patience of a kindergartner, he reiterated that the peace and commercial security of every State depended on the union of all; that the union government was legitimate heir to all crown lands; that the western vacant lands belonged, not only of right, but of necessity, to the central government, if it was to function properly for the good of the whole country.

It was James Madison, father of the Constitution, who introduced a bill in the Virginia Legislature which would have enriched Paine by the sum of four thousand pounds, a sum which that prosperous State could well have afforded. The bill, he writes Washington, “was lost by a single voice. Whether a greater disposition to reward patriotic and distinguished exertions of genius will be found on any succeeding occasion, is not for me to predetermine. Should it finally appear that the merits of the man, whose writings have so much contributed to enforce and foster the spirit of independence in the people of America, are unable to inspire them with a just beneficence, the world, it is to be feared, will give us as little credit for our policy as for gratitude in this particular.” The pamphlet *Public Good*, in other words, cost Paine four thousand pounds; it was not the first nor the last time that the public good proved a costly hobby to him.





CARTOON BY JAMES GILLRAY

In picture, song, and story the author of *Rights of Man* was lauded or reviled. The lowly and the liberals hailed him as the champion of human rights, the high-ups as the devil's best friend. He was the cause rather than the victim of nightmare. (Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum.)



Defeated in his own State, Washington moved on Pennsylvania, and enlisted the good will of John Dickinson, who brought the matter before the Pennsylvania Assembly:

"Arriving in America just before the war broke out, he [Paine] commenced his residence here, and *became a citizen of this Commonwealth by taking the oath of allegiance at a very early period*. So important were his services during the late contest, that those persons whose own merits in the course of it have been most distinguished concur with a highly honorable unanimity in entertaining sentiments of esteem for him, and interesting themselves in his deserts. . . .

"We confide that you will, then, feel the attention of Pennsylvania is drawn towards Mr. Paine by motives equally grateful to the human heart, and reputable to the Republic; and that you will join with us in the opinion that a suitable acknowledgment of his eminent services, and a proper provision for a continuance of them in an independent manner, should be made on the part of this State." Thus spurred on, Pennsylvania was promptly grateful in the sum of five hundred pounds.

While Paine was averse to poaching on the union treasury, he had a long-outstanding account with Congress which, in view of the improved condition of the country, he felt justified in presenting. Congress preferred the rôle of benefactor to that of debtor, and resolved:

"That the early, unsolicited, and continued labors of Mr. Thomas Paine, in explaining and enforcing the principles of the nature of liberty, and civil government, have been well received by the citizens of these States, and merit the approbation of Congress; and that in con-

sideration of these services, and the benefits produced thereby, Mr. Paine is entitled to a liberal gratification from the United States." All things considered, the gratification was not excessively liberal. The Committee fixed upon the sum of six thousand dollars, which the House cut in half.

Nevertheless, Paine was now quite happy to be out of immediate want; by the legislatures of two of the greatest States, and by the Congress of the United States, he had been recognized as a most useful citizen, and one of the makers of the American Republic. Ambition was satisfied, vanity gratified, financial worry lifted. Unhampered by the pinching of sordid poverty, he could continue "a volunteer to the world." With a heavier purse and a lighter heart, he could now offer Washington the hospitality of "a few oysters or a crust of bread and cheese."



## Chapter X

### THE SONGS OF ZION

With wonderful deathless ditties  
We build up the world's great cities,  
And out of a fabulous story  
We fashion an empire's glory:  
One man with a dream, at pleasure,  
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;  
And three with a new song's measure  
Can trample an empire down.

We, in the ages lying,  
In the buried past of the earth,  
Built Nineveh with our sighing  
And Babel itself with our mirth;  
And o'erthrew them with prophesying  
To the old of the new world's worth;  
For each age is a dream that is dying,  
Or one that is coming to birth.

—O'SHAUGHNESSY.

THE proclamation of peace with the external foe was the tocsin for the fray of domestic factions; released from the fear of a common danger, they flew at each other. Mad Anthony Wayne's shot went wide of the mark. The profiteering patriots did not look down on the "brave fellows" whose endurance had secured their property from the avarice of a victorious foe; they were too completely absorbed in husbanding their ill-got gains to give a glance in their direction. Fed on new and fine ideas, and very little else, the brave fellows who had so satisfactorily finished the country's fight were minded



to keep going a little longer to insure their own right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Enraged by neglect and egged on by designing officers, the army threatened Congress with a hold-up to collect their back pay. Only their old Commander could reason with them. Patience yet a little longer, he pleaded, you who have endured the hardships of war with such heroic fortitude. Fumbling his notes short-sightedly, "You see," he said, "I have not only grown gray in your service, but blind." No other man in the country could counsel patience with so good a grace; force of example rather than precept carried the appeal across and ended the mutiny.

An incorruptibly honest, tolerant, nonpartisan, conservative public-minded gentleman, Washington was the one centripetal force in the nation, the only universally respected figure on the political horizon on whom the warring factions could unite. Homesick for Mount Vernon, longing for the retirement he had so hardly earned, a highly developed sense of duty kept him on the firing-line. It was a much more difficult matter, he discovered, to reason with ambitious politicians than with the justly outraged army. He had taken the fortunes of war with his back to the wall; the factional strife was more distressing than the privations of Valley Forge. "By God," was the anguished cry of our first President, "I would rather be in my grave than in my present position!" The outburst has the ring of sincerity.

Unlike Paine, Washington never saw his countrymen in the rosy gleam of romance, nor the Revolution as ushering in a new social order. The master of Mount Vernon had no quarrel with the existing order; he was a favored son. Loyal, conservative gentlemen like himself,

men of property and position, had been treated as children or menials, and irritated into rebellion by the stubborn refusal of the English government to concede their right to a voice in their own affairs. There was nothing for it, then, but to push the English over on their own side of the water, if possible, and keep them there. This accomplished, the General was somewhat bewildered to find that the war was not over.

Time was when lordly bandits fared forth gayly to plunder, gathering up men of their own kidney, who relished a fight for its own sake, lusty robbers who made merry over the fallen foe:

His men and beasts supplied our feasts  
And his overthrow our chorus.

With the centralizing of government, war had shifted from a private to a national enterprise; bandits became politicians. Commercial nations were finding industry more profitable than the singing of plunder choruses. In the industrial and comparatively peaceful modern nations, war must be "sold" to those who control the funds necessary to maintain it. The honest idealist is unequaled as a supersalesman; life, liberty, civilization, and democracy are his wares. These catchwords are made into popular songs, and the people sing spiritedly to "hail the brightness of Zion's glad morning." With the peace comes a sudden change as the old guard quietly slips back into power; the disillusioned idealist finds that his occupation as cheer-leader is gone. It is a day of triumph for the cynic, but the cynic is short-sighted, and history can be viewed only in long stretches. The new

song which has been added to the folk music of the world is a requiem for the old order.

So it happened after the Revolutionary War; the strong men, the vested interests, were ready to take over the privileges and perquisites of the overthrown monarchy and establish themselves in control. Washington had only to appear before the ill-requited soldiery whose sufferings he had shared, and the mutiny was quelled. The less tractable politicians planned to exploit his popularity for their own ends. The country had given a huge order to its first President—to bring out of chaos a new system of government, and to set it in running order. The Providence which is supposed to watch over fools and children was guarding the cradle of the infant republic when Washington was chosen for president. He had the character and patience to nurse it through the peevish danger period.

The lubricant for oiling the governmental wheels could not be purchased for a song, sung never so spiritedly. It cost money, a very scarce commodity; for until the wheels had actually begun to turn, no credit could be had. "I can restore the public credit," Alexander Hamilton confidently asserted, and to this financial wizard Washington turned in his predicament. As aide to the commander-in-chief early in the war, this young man had been arrogant and presumptuous, but the President was not one to nourish a grudge against any man on whose ability and sincerity he could rely. Whatever faults have been charged against Hamilton, he never feathered his own nest at the public expense; his was the pride of a strong man running a race for power.

Hamilton's genealogy was recorded with savage brev-

ity by John Adams—"the bastard son of a Scotch pedlar." Remarkable even as a child for ambition and self-confidence, he soon soared far above the place where the stork had dropped him. The bar sinister has never been a bar to high society, and Hamilton married into one of the first Colonial families. Fastidious in dress, imperious and impressive in manner, he walked the upper circles holding his head high, a recognized leader. Japan, from the little he knew of it, was his ideal of a well-ordered country, a people uncomplainingly laborious and adoringly submissive to their betters. He was quite carried away by the idea of a hereditary aristocracy and hoped, with the support of those who considered themselves eligible for a place in it, to confer that benefit on America. He had a penchant for war, the sport of the old aristocracies.

It was not these aristocratic foibles which influenced the well-born republican gentleman in the presidential chair to make Hamilton Secretary of the empty Treasury. When only half awake, he knew offhand how many beans make five, and the government needed a financial conjurer who could cause real money to appear where only printed paper was visible. The man who can shake salt on the tail of high finance is always sure of a place in the sun, and this trick Hamilton could perform. As for the new song's measure which the people were humming, Hamilton found it excruciatingly irritating.

Washington, to give each party a fair chance, offered the portfolio of State to his esteemed friend and neighbor, Thomas Jefferson. The Secretaries of State and of the Treasury were as temperamentally and politically congenial as the two Kilkenny cats. Our first cabinet, in



fact, savored of a Gilbert libretto. The tall, lank, gentlemanly, unassuming Virginian, whose maternal ancestry boasted royal blood, was rather indifferent to personal appearance. He had grown up among the best America produced, and taking the world of that day by and large, it was not a discreditable showing.

The lord of Monticello loathed war and hoped never again to see a soldier in uniform. The master of many slaves, he detested the institution of slavery. It was written in the book of destiny, he said, that some day the negro must be free. He would have justified Cornwallis in stealing his own blacks, he said, if his object had been to free them; penning them up till they died of starvation and disease he condemned as unnecessary brutality. He was passionately fond of music, particularly those new songs, some of which he had written.

Accustomed to military obedience, Washington miscalculated the power of his influence and position when he imagined that the lion and the lamb would cuddle down together at his command. One roared; the other bleated. The two men were leaders of opposing parties engaged in the unending struggle—the party of reaction, whose appetite for dominion had got an edge in the long conflict, and the party advocating the new doctrine of popular sovereignty. In the effort to keep a balance between them, the war-weary soldier in the presidential chair was distracted.

The aristocratic party was speeding up; trading on Washington's popularity, some would have made him king, themselves the power behind the throne. He was not always so manageable as they had hoped. King! He



would rather till his Mount Vernon acres than be emperor of the world. He knew that shouts of "Hosanna" quickly changed to cries of "Away with him!"

Revolutionary ideals, like the continental currency, had greatly depreciated in value. Some were determined, however, to have both redeemed at face value. The acrimonious fight makes unpleasant reading. The conservatives openly jeered at the Declaration of Independence, which, according to the *New England Portfolio*, was "an incoherent accumulation of indigestible and impractical political dogmas, dangerous to the peace of the world and seditious in its local tendency." But we have taken a step beyond our story.

As the political trend became obvious, Paine must have wept as he remembered the Zion of his vision. It was not his way, however, to hang his harp upon a willow; he would harp the songs of Zion till they became national anthems: "[We] have grafted on our infant commonwealth the manners of ancient and corrupted monarchies. . . . We have as yet effected but a partial independence. The Revolution can only be said to be compleat, when we shall have freed ourselves, no less from the influence of foreign prejudices, than from the fetters of foreign power."

The national government was stalling by reason of state jealousies; Paine preached union with religious fanaticism: "I feel myself hurt when I hear the Union, that great Palladium of our liberty and safety, the least irreverently spoken of. It is the most sacred thing in the Constitution of America."

Under the year's contract made with Washington, Morris, and Livingston, he had gone up to Rhode Island to

persuade the obstreperous bantam State that only under the wing of a sovereign union could she hope to escape the snare of the fowler. Reluctantly the little State was brought to see the point. Although Virginia killed the bill to reward Paine for his services when his *Public Good* denied her claim to the western lands, she ultimately ceded the territory in dispute to the Federal government. It was slow work teaching the States of America the meaning of "United."

Thanks to the belated gratitude of Congress and the States, Paine was now a free lance. A versatile idealist, he frequently found himself out of a job, but never out of employment; with many irons in the fire, one was sure to be hot. The turn in politics was not reassuring to a radical democrat; for a time he seems to have had more hope of usefulness in other fields. Franklin suggested that he employ his pen on a history of the Revolution; the idea pleased him, but nothing ever came of it; more pressing interests continually crowded it out.

The increasing power of the moneyed interests occasioned great popular alarm; a movement was on foot to recall the charter of the Bank of North America, the bank which owed its existence to the fund started by Paine's contribution, and which had tided Washington over a bad place. Paine rushed to the rescue with *Dissertations on Government*, which afforded an opportunity to recall to the public mind the great Revolutionary principles of justice, as much endangered by one party to the post-war strife as the Bank was by the other party. Cheetham, whose abuse of Paine is punctuated by admissions of the valuable services he rendered, declares that his pamphlet prevented "this act of despotism."

"In republics," Paine wrote, "such as established in America, the sovereign power over which there is no control, and which controls all others, remains where nature placed it—in the people: for the people of America are the fountain of power." The fountain will remain unsullied so long as the people understand and accept the responsibilities of power.

"The foundation principle of public good is justice, and whenever justice is *impartially administered* the public good is promoted; for as it is to the good of every man that no injustice be done to him, so likewise it is to his good that the principle which secures him should not be violated in the person of another, because such a violation weakens *his* security, and leaves to chance what ought to be to him a rock to stand on. . . . It is understood that [the people] mutually resolve and pledge themselves to each other, rich and poor alike, to support and maintain this rule of equal justice among them. They therefore not only renounce the despotic form [of government] *but the principle*, as well of governing as of being governed by mere will and power, and substitute in its place a government of justice. . . . In this pledge and contract lies the foundation of the republic: and the security of the rich and the consolation of the poor is, that what each man has is his own; that no despotic sovereign can take it from him, and that the common cementing principle which holds all parts of a republic together secures him likewise from the *despotism of numbers*: for despotism may be more effectually acted by many over a few than by one man over all." He quotes from the declaration of rights in the Pennsylvania Constitution which he had helped to frame:

“XIV. That a frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles, and a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, industry and frugality are absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty and keep a government free—the people ought therefore to pay particular attention to these points in the choice of officers and representatives, and have a right to exact a due and constant regard to them, from their legislators and magistrates in making and executing such laws as are necessary for the good government of the state.”

For, he continues: “A republic properly understood is a sovereignty of justice, in contradistinction to a sovereignty of will. . . . The bank may forfeit the charter by delinquency, but the delinquency must be proved and established by a legal process in a court of justice and trial by jury; for the state or the assembly, is not to be the judge of its own case, but must come to the laws of the land for judgment; for that which is law for the individual is likewise law for the state.”

All dead laws, Paine believed, should be decently buried, “should cease of themselves in thirty years, and have no legal force beyond that time. . . . The British, for want of some general regulation of this kind, have a great number of obsolete laws; which, though out of use and forgotten, are not out of force, and are occasionally brought up for particular purposes, and innocent persons trepanned thereby.”

This peculiar form of ancestor-worship persisted in America. Quite recently perfectly respectable members of the Civil Liberties Union peaceably assembled at Paterson, New Jersey, were taken into custody and tried for riot under a long-forgotten law. The archaic phrase-



ology was identical with the law under which William Penn was tried in 1670 for the same offense, a law which even at that time was a hoary relic. Such legal rubbish is a fire risk. No generation, Paine contended, should presume to bind posterity: "The next age will think for itself by the same rule of right that we have done, and not admit any assumed authority of ours to encroach upon the system of that day. Our FOREVER ends where their FOREVER begins." John Adams was troubled by anxious forebodings about the behavior of posterity; Paine was anxious that posterity should have no reason to be ashamed of his generation.

Franklin has become the symbol of hard-headed American practicality; Paine has frequently been cast for the rôle of light-headed idealist. The hard-headed Franklin apparently entertained a high opinion of his protégé as a man of good judgment. Paine had had a hand in the framing of the Pennsylvania Constitution; Franklin hoped for his assistance in revising it:

"I was very sorry," he wrote, "on my arrival to find that you had left the city. Your present arduous undertaking, I easily conceive, demands retirement, and though we shall reap the fruits of it, I cannot help regretting the want of your abilities here, where in the present moment they might, I think, be successfully employed. Parties still run very high—*Common Sense* would unite them. It is to be hoped that it has not abandoned us forever." Paine had little opinion of his ability as an executive; his usefulness in conference was due to a way he had of making straight for fundamental facts as the crow flies.

He was now one of the notables of the day; wherever



he went, doors were opened to him. The New Rochelle mansion, the gift of the grateful State of New York, made it possible for him to move into the leisure class, but the change was not to his taste. He gave a housewarming party to his New Rochelle neighbors, turned his back on his estate, and hastened on to Bordentown to enjoy the society of his ex-Quaker friend, Colonel Kirkbride, and to work out a new invention with the assistance of John Hall, a jovial Englishman and an expert mechanic.

It was the time when interest in scientific invention was beginning to stir; the wheels of machinery had begun to turn; exciting possibilities were presented to the inventive mind. In the darkest hours of the war, Paine had been cogitating on utilizing the power of steam. The early experimenters with steam navigation were his personal friends, and it was generally admitted that he was a pioneer in the field. A planing machine and other inventions stand to his credit. But it was to bridges rather than boats that his mind turned. Old-world bridges were unsuitable for the mighty continental streams, swollen by spring freshets and blocked by winter ice. He had studied with admiration the architectural craft of the spider, and the structural ingenuity of that little insect suggested to his mind a new sort of bridge. It was his bold idea to substitute iron for the less durable materials in common use, and to construct his bridge with a single arch, patriotically fashioned of thirteen ribs, representing the thirteen States. As the stream of politics seemed to be reverting to the old channels, he temporarily forgot the worries of the world in the exhilaration of fighting and conquering the forces of Nature. With the assistance

of skillful John Hall, his bridge idea soon took tangible form.

The models completed, Hall carried them to Franklin, "as well," wrote the inventor, "for the purpose of showing my respect to you as my patron in this country, as for the sake of having your opinion thereon.—The European method of bridge architecture, by piers and arches, is not adapted to many of the rivers of America on account of the ice in winter. The construction of these I have the honor of presenting to you is designed to obviate the difficulty by leaving the whole passage of the river clear of the incumbrance of piers. . . . My first design was for a bridge over the Harlem River, for my good friend General Morris of Morrisania . . . but I cannot help thinking that it might be carried across the Schuylkill."

Of a proposed plan for bridging the Schuylkill, he writes: "I have no opinion of any bridge over the Schuylkill that is to be erected on piers—the sinking of the piers will sink more money than they have any idea of and will not stand when done. . . . Three piers in the middle of the river, large and powerful enough to resist the ice, will cause such an alteration in the bed and channel of the river that there is no saying what course it may take." The iron bridge, he is confident, "will stand four times as long, or as much longer as iron is more durable than wood."

Franklin favored Paine's bridge, but the Pennsylvania politicians dilly-dallied after the manner of their kind, and Paine decided to go abroad with his models and make a bid for the recognition of European scientists. Franklin gave him the necessary introductions: "This letter goes

by Mr. Paine," he wrote to M. de Veillard, "one of our principal writers at the Revolution, being the author of *Common Sense*, a pamphlet that had prodigious effects."

It was now thirteen years since Paine had wandered across the ocean to Pennsylvania in the hope of finding something to do. In the happenings of those thirteen years he had played an important part. All Europe was shaken by the American victory as by an earthquake, and he was returning an honored founder of the new republic. His departure was hastened by an appealing letter from his old father, who longed to see him. He had delightful anticipations of a renewal of that association with men of science which had redeemed his youth from sordid desolation. But again the political world was in for another cataclysm, and fate was heading him straight for the area of disturbance.

Jefferson, then Minister to France, was his loyal friend, and he was warmly welcomed in distinguished circles. Jefferson, too, found relaxation from politics in mechanical inventions. He had been honored by the French Academy of Science for his invention of an improved plow. To him Paine communicated the good news of success:

"The committee have among themselves finally agreed on their report; I saw this morning it will be read in the Academy on Wednesday. The report goes pretty fully to support the principles of the construction, with their reasons for that opinion." To another American friend he writes: "The Committee was directed by the Academy to examine all the models and plans for iron bridges that had been proposed in France, and they unanimously gave

the preference to our own, as being the simplest, strongest, and lightest."

Thus encouraged by the most eminent scientific authority in France, Paine sent his model over to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the English Royal Society. Science Paine regarded as the universal meeting-place of the explorers of Nature, a field uncircumscribed by national boundaries; science was a perpetual exhibit of the principle of mutual aid. In science all men were brothers; a benefit to one was a benefit to all. The generous praise of Sir Joseph Banks warmed the cockles of his heart: "I expect many improvements from your countrymen, who think with vigor and are in a great measure free from those shackles of theory which are imposed on the minds of our people before they are capable of exerting their mental faculties to advantage."

The world of science was more enlightened than the world of politics; to be received into it was a peculiar gratification. Paine hobnobbed with the intellectual élite, the only aristocracy he acknowledged. A snug fortune seemed imminent, but at the call of fate he turned off the highroad to peace and prosperity for the irresistibly alluring bypaths of radical reform. Absorbed as he was in the bridge business, he had yet, amid all the distractions of Paris, found time to ride his pet hobby, the promotion of universal civilization. He had made friends with Cardinal De Brienne's secretary, and had worked out with the Cardinal a plan for a better Anglo-French understanding. Arriving in England toward the close of 1787, he submitted this scheme to Edmund Burke, whom he highly esteemed as a friend of America.

To revolutionize the *opinions* of mankind was Paine's



study; a change of thought was a necessary accompaniment to a change of political form. His own opinions had been gradually revolutionized by experience. For him the American struggle had been a war for ideals; now, in that favored and goodly land, he saw a tendency to "deride the principle and deny the fact." He never yielded ground on the necessity for American resistance, but there crept into his utterances an undercurrent of doubt as to the efficacy of violence in bringing about a better order of society. Only in defense of civilization could war be justified, but war itself was a denial of civilization. In the best of all possible wars he had seen men grow callous to human misery. Constant familiarity with scenes of the most primitive savagery, the loosening of all social restraints, were, he observed, a setback to civilization, a loss to charge against whatever gain might be made. "When we take a survey of mankind we cannot help cursing the wretch, who, to the unavoidable misfortunes of nature shall willfully add the calamities of war."

With genuine alarm he saw Europe spoiling for another fight. Holland at the moment was the object of George III.'s malevolent activity, and he had found it comparatively easy to win Mr. Pitt from the opposition to his own side. As the self-appointed arbiter of the destinies of Europe, England was meddling in the internal affairs of Holland, supporting the House of Orange, with whom the Dutch people happened to be on not the best of terms. The Dutch King had favored the English King as against the American rebels, while the Dutch people were enthusiastic for the success of the rebellion; for all Europe was involved in American affairs in 1776, as



America has been involved in European affairs since 1914.

Paine cherished a personal, almost fanatical gratitude toward all who had befriended the great cause; he was no friend of any friend of the never to be sufficiently anathematized George III. Without giving a thought to the effect of politics on bridges, Paine broke out with a pamphlet against a Dutch war, under the ironical title, *Prospects on the Rubicon*. He had shifted ground since the time when he opposed lofty sentiment to the Abbé Raynal's harsh and chilly political economy. Paine remained to the last a stubborn idealist, but his mental vision was not defective, and he recognized fact when he encountered it; the Abbé's worldly wisdom plus experience had not been lost on him. Events had ultimately decided the debate in favor of the Frenchman and economic determinism as against Paine and exalted sentiment. He had by this time discovered that "interest is as predominant and as silent in its operations as love; it resists all the attempts of force, and countermines all the stratagem of control. . . . It is not our doing a thing with a design that it shall answer such or such an end; the means taken must have a natural ability and tendency within themselves to produce no other, for it is this, and not our wishes and policy that govern the event. . . . Nature has her own way of working in the heart, and all plans or politics not founded thereon will disappoint themselves."

While Paine recognized disturbing facts, he was never staggered by them; sometimes facts which were uncongenial company for an idealist were put to work for him. Little influenced himself by policy and very much by

gratitude, he sincerely believed what he had written Raynal, that a grateful America would favor France commercially. He may have discovered in France that the motives which actuated the government were not such as to lay America under a crushing burden of gratitude; France had a selfish object, and it had been achieved. He knew for a certainty that despite the atrocities committed by the British armies in America, despite the fact that England was holding the rich fur trading-posts till the last farthing of indebtedness was paid; that she was using them—so said President Washington—to instigate fiendish raids of the Indians on defenseless inhabitants, the American government was leaving no stone unturned to effect a commercial treaty with England. He saw, in fact, what General Washington had very decorously phrased, that governments are stonily indifferent to humanitarian considerations; that the occasional outbursts of emotion in appealing to their people are pure hokum; that politicians use sentiment for business purposes only. All of which had brought him to the conclusion: "Right by chance and wrong by system, are things so frequently seen in the political world, that it is a proof of prudence neither to censure nor applaud too soon."

He argued, therefore, that as it would always be to the interest of the Dutch to maintain neutrality in European wars, nothing could be gained by an attempt to force them against their interest: "In short, this alliance of national interest is the only one that can be trusted. . . . Alliances . . . uncombined with national interest, are but the quagmire of politics. . . ."

In the light of experience he was obliged to abandon

a pleasing theory; alliances could no more resist the pressure of interest than a wooden bridge could resist the pressure of ice. He must therefore prove that war was detrimental to the interest of the people of any country. Hating monarchy for its arrogance and the bloody trail of its wars, he had taken up arms in America; that experience increased his bitterness against war.

"It will always happen, that any rumor of war will be popular among a great number of people in London.—There are thousands who live by it; it is their harvest; and the clamor those people keep up . . . passes unsuspectingly for the voice of the people. . . . It is not till after the mischief is done that the deception is discovered. . . . 'Confusion to the politics of Europe, and may every nation be at war in six months,' was a toast given in my hearing not long since.

"When we consider the calamities of war and the miseries it inflicts . . . the tens of thousands of every age and sex who are rendered wretched by the event, . . . some tender chord tuned by the hand of its creator . . . struggles to emit in the hearing of the soul a note of sorrowing sympathy. Let it then be heard, and let men learn to feel, that the true greatness of a nation is founded on the principle of humanity; and that to avoid war when her own existence is not endangered, and wherein the happiness of man must be wantonly sacrificed, is a higher principle of true honor than madly to engage in it. . . .

"It has but one thing certain, and that is increase of TAXES. The policy of European courts is now so cast, and their interest so interwoven with each other, that however easy it may be to begin a war, the weight and in-

fluence of interfering nations compel the conqueror to unprofitable conditions of peace.”

His consideration of the subject of war debt is interesting in view of the present controversy: “From the year 1688 (the era of the Revolution) to the year 1702, a period of fourteen years, the sums borrowed by government at different times, amounted to forty-four millions; yet this sum was paid off almost as fast as it was borrowed. . . . This was a greater exertion than the nation has ever made since, for the exertion is not in borrowing, BUT IN PAYING. From that time wars have been carried on by borrowing and funding the capital on a perpetual interest, instead of paying it off, and thereby continually carrying forward and accumulating the weight and expense of every war into the next. By this means that which was light at first becomes immensely heavy at last. The nation has now on its shoulders the weight of all the wars from the time of Queen Anne. This practice is exactly like that of loading a horse with a feather at a time till you break his back. . . .”

As every war had cost double its predecessor, future wars would increase in cost at the same rate: “The weight of accumulating interest is not much felt till after many years . . . but when it begins to be heavy, as it does now, the burden increases like that of purchasing a horse for a farthing for the first nail in the shoe and doubling it. . . .

“That the funding system contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction, is as certain as that the human body contains within itself the seeds of death. The event is as fixed as fate, unless it can be taken as a proof that because we are not dead we are not to die.

"The consequence of the funding scheme, even if no other event takes place, will be to create two violent parties in the nation. The one goaded by the continual increase of taxes to pay the interest; the other reaping a benefit from the taxes by receiving the interest."

"That nation therefore is only truly wise, who, contenting herself with the means of defense, creates to herself no unnecessary enemies by seeking to be greater than the system of Europe admits. The monarch or the minister who exceeds this line knows but little of his business."

"Credit is often no more than opinion," he continues, "and the difference between credit and money is, that money requires no opinion to support it. . . . Credulity is wealth while credulity lasts, and credit is in a thousand instances, the child of credulity. It requires no less faith to believe in paper money, than to believe a man could go into a quart bottle; and the nation whose credulity can be imposed upon by bottle conjuring, can for a time, be imposed on by paper currency."

Very little has been added to the store of political wisdom since the eighteenth century; the war conjurer pulls the same old tricks from his sleeve, and startles his audience as of yore: Paine tells us that "a silent wish . . . was universally expanding itself, that wars, so fatal to the true interest, and burdensome by taxes to the subjects of both countries, might exist no more, and that a long and lasting peace might take place.

"But . . . the pettish vanity of a young and inexperienced minister [Mr. Pitt] who balanced himself between peace and war to take his choice of circumstances, instead of principles, and who went into an expensive



armament when there was none to contend with . . . has destroyed those seeds of harmony that might have been considered of more value than fleets and armies.

"He has permitted the nation to run mad under the universal influence of a groundless belief in vast hostile armaments in the East and West Indies, and the supposition of a secret that never existed. By this means the sparks of ill will are afresh kindled up between the nations, the fair prospect of a lasting peace is vanished, and a train of future evils fills the scene."

Paine plumed himself on his accuracy as a political weather prophet. He was not infallible, but as a fore-caster he compares favorably with the statesmen of the time. Long before the majority of the American leaders, he had foreseen the inevitable separation. He foretold the effect of the American victory on the people of Europe; France was moving now, and he looked to her to lead the oppressed of Europe out of the house of bondage.

The principles of '76 were not made in America; for a century back Europe had been seething for a change; the more adventurous of the dissatisfied emigrated to America. Naturally, therefore, the first stand against the old order was made in the New World. The Declaration of Independence was acclaimed all over Europe, outside the upper circles. In 1780 the Irish Protestant leader, Henry Grattan, enunciated those principles on behalf of Ireland: "No power on earth but the King, lords and commons *of Ireland* is competent to make laws for Ireland." A few months after the surrender of Cornwallis, Grattan, after consultation with other leaders, actually moved for an Irish Declaration of Independence.

La Fayette, returning from the American war, adorned

his sanctum with a copy of the great American document, leaving a blank space to be filled by the French Declaration. Washington was a hero in the Old World, and Paine declared when sending him the key of the demolished prison that "the principles of America opened the Bastille." Mr. Burke very gently reminded King Louis that in helping to deprive King George of half his crown he had jeopardized his own.

With his keen scent for political change of wind, Paine felt the coming storm in France, though he could not gauge its magnitude and fury. It would wreck the rotten old rubbish of the French system and blow through Europe, leaving everything as fresh as a spring morning. For Paine's program included the liberation of all Europe. It is certainly within the bounds of probability that if the French had not been harried from the outside, they might never have been driven to insane rage. It was the duplicity of their rulers and outside interference which brought them to that state of "inconceivable fury" reported to Washington by Gouverneur Morris.

Paine's personal fortunes were never brighter than at the beginning of the French Revolution. Pushed out of his native land only a few years before by poverty, he was now a person of consequence, received as such by the greatest in the land. He spent a pleasant week as the guest of Edmund Burke. "I am in some intimacy with Mr. Burke," he wrote Jefferson, "and after the new ministry is formed he has proposed to introduce me to them. The Duke of Portland, at whose seat in the country I was for a few days last summer, will be the head of the Treasury." He was in constant correspondence with Jefferson, who signed himself, "With sincere attachment,

dear Sir; your affectionate friend and servant." The two men had the same interests, which included "all things visible or audible," especially such as might in any way be beneficial to America. Jefferson in his wanderings found a variety of rice much superior to that grown in the Southern States. Export of the seed was prohibited, but he managed to stuff his pockets with the coveted kernels, and on his return divided his find among the planters of the south. Paine in the same spirit poked about in cotton mills, steel furnaces, factories of all kinds: "All these things might easily be carried on in America." He was in fact an unpaid commercial attaché, an "unofficial observer" for the United States. His letters on English politics Jefferson considered of sufficient importance to be forwarded to Washington. The activities of this pair of busy patriots leads to the inference that they required very little sleep.

Meanwhile Paine was working at his bridge "with practical Iron men, who must finally be the executors of the work." Two English bridges had collapsed, undermined by quicksand, which made him hopeful of spanning the Thames with one of his own. Nevertheless, he kept edging toward trouble: "I have some thought of coming over to France for two or three weeks, as I shall have little to do here until the bridge is ready for erecting. Tho' I have but a slender opinion of myself for executive business, I think upon the whole that I have managed this matter tolerably well." The boast was premature; his bridge was approved and erected on the River Wear at a time when his politics had become so offensive that the bridge and all money accruing to him were confiscated. This was done by the sensitively moral Eng-

lishmen who at that very moment were railing at the French robbers for appropriating the property of the nobility. In the political world it all depends on whose ox is gored. There is no reason to suppose that foreknowledge of the consequences would have changed Paine's course, or influenced him to mend his political ways; principle before interest was his motto. The bridge was safely launched; there was nothing to be lost but the profit.

Meanwhile, he thought he saw a light breaking through the darkness in England, and that he heard the humming of the songs of Zion. Jingoism was rampant; in a letter to Jefferson he quotes from an address of Sir William Appleby: "Britain, the Queen of the Isles, the pride of Nations, the Arbitress of Europe, perhaps of the world." "Stuffed with nonsense," he comments, "for national puffing none equals them." Still there were encouraging signs: "There is in this country a very considerable remains of the feudal system, which the people did not see till the revolution in France placed it before their eyes. While the multitude could be terrified with the cry of Arbitrary power, wooden shoes, popery, and such like stuff, they thought themselves by comparison an extraordinarily free people, but the bugbear now loses its force, and they appear to me to be turning their eyes towards the Aristocracy of their own nation. This is a new mode of conquering and I think it will have its effect."

If Paine was a dreamer, he sometimes dreamed prophetically. The practical American business man, no believer in dreams, made a discovery after the World War, which Paine saw in his dreams over a century before.



After long years of labor trouble it suddenly dawned on him that a nation cannot prosper while its people are economically crippled; its prosperity is proportionate to their ability to consume. Wages come back to the manufacturer in profits. "To enrich the nation is to enrich the individuals which compose it," Paine wrote. "To enrich the farmer is to enrich the farm—and consequently the landlords. . . . The richer the subject the richer the revenue, because the consumption from which the taxes are raised is in proportion to the abilities of the people to consume; therefore the more effectual method to raise the revenue and the rental of a country is to raise the condition of the people." This idea has not yet percolated into the business mind of England.

Paine was a glutton for work of a revolutionary nature; any people contemplating a change from a feudal system to a more representative form of government had only to let him know. It was all the same to him, English, French, German, American; every blow helped to break the chains of human slavery. But his heart was in America: "Accept, my dear Sir," he wrote Jefferson, who was turning homeward, "my most hearty thanks for your many services and friendship. Remember me with an overflowing affection to my dear America—the people and the place. Be so kind as to shake hands with them for me, and tell our beloved General Washington and my old friend Dr. Franklin how much I long to see them. . . . I wrote you on the 15th by post—but I was so full of the thoughts of America and my American friends that I forgot France." France soon recalled herself to his memory; while he lived he would never again forget her.



## Chapter XI

### THE DUEL WITH BURKE

When it shall be said in any country in the world, My poor are happy: neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want, the taxes are not oppressive; the rational world is my friend, because I am the friend of its happiness: when these things can be said, then may that country boast of its constitution and its government.—PAINE's *Rights of Man*.

THE mutual admiration between Burke and Paine was of short duration. Burke was now an old man bowed down by bitter personal sorrow. He had drawn a stout bow in many a good cause; his life was on the ebb tide with the social order he loved. In the struggle of opposing ideas which turned the world topsy-turvy, Burke and Paine took opposite sides, and both have left voluminous expositions of their faith. Their verbal duel is the record of the social cyclone which swept their generation.

Like Alexander Hamilton, Burke was a man of lowly origin who revered hereditary aristocracy and supported class privilege. He, too, believed in liberty, as much of it for the common herd as the well-born thought good for them. When "the swinish multitude" evinced a desire to meddle in their own affairs, Burke was put in a panic.

He has clearly defined his position on social and economic questions in *Thoughts on Scarcity* and *The Letters of a Regicide Peace*, published at a later date than his *Reflexions on the French Revolution*, which brought

Paine into the lists against him. As it is universally admitted that he was a gentleman of ability and integrity, a statesman of parts, we can accurately measure the distance covered since the eighteenth century by a perusal of the writings of Edmund Burke, who valued consistency but did not always achieve it. Of the French Revolution he declared: "The present war is above all others . . . a war against landed property"; he "shuddered with horror" at the confiscations in France. In a bout with the Duke of Bedford, a French sympathizer, he wrote: "I have supported with very great zeal . . . those opinions, or if his grace likes another expression better, those old prejudices, which buoy up the ponderous mass of his nobility, wealth, and titles. I have omitted no exertion to prevent him and them from sinking to that level, to which the meretricious French faction his grace at least coquets with, omit no exertion to reduce both. I have done all I could to discountenance inquiries into the fortunes of those, who hold large portions of wealth without any apparent merit of their own. I have strained every nerve to keep the Duke of Bedford in that situation, which alone makes him my superior."

This strenuous exertion is somewhat mystifying, as Burke in his wrath proceeds to twit his grace of Bedford with the fact that the family came into possession of the ponderous mass of wealth and titles by confiscation and murder. Burke accepts the fact that notwithstanding the crime, possession had been sanctified: "It is his by law; what have I to do with it or its history?" He does not bother to reconcile this history with his contention that the crimes of France were unique in the annals of world iniquity.

Those who have followed the fortunes of the Russian Revolution can form some faint idea of the furor caused by its predecessor. Opinions now accepted as orthodox were then the rankest Bolshevism. The very same methods which proved so disastrous in coping with the upheaval in the 1790's were the methods followed by the conservatives of 1919 with the very same results. In both revolutions, terrified neighbors rushed men and money into the distracted countries to help the counter revolutionists; in both cases, loud and outraged wails were heard when the red factions reciprocated by penetrating into neighbor countries with their revolutionary propaganda. Sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander.

The cordon sanitaire which the Allies complacently established to confine the Russian political contagion to the country of origin was an echo of Edmund Burke. An Alien Bill, he asserted, would only keep the scoundrels out of England, an altogether inadequate precaution. To get anywhere in Europe, traveling Englishmen must pass through the cannibal land of France; the possible consequences horrified him: "We expel suspected foreigners from hence, but we suffer every Englishman to pass over into France, and to be initiated into all the infernal discipline of the place. . . . Let it be remembered that no young man can go to any part of Europe without taking this place of pestilential contagion in his way. . . . The least active part of the community will be debauched by this travel." Prosperous young Englishmen could not be trusted to see in French iniquity the monster of such frightful mien which haunted the peace of the statesman.

The mere thought of France produced a brain storm and a rolling thunder of words, long before the execution of the King and the Reign of Terror. From the lofty tone of the politicians it might be inferred that England, supported by the King of Prussia and the Sultan of Turkey, was arming to defend the Christian religion and insure the well-being of the human race. Yet occasionally the lush growth of sentiment was penetrated by a clear ray of light. His merit, Burke claimed, was "in defending the whole of the national church of my own time and my own country, AND THE WHOLE OF THE NATIONAL CHURCHES OF ALL COUNTRIES, from the principles and examples which lead to ecclesiastical pillage, thence to the pillage of all property, and thence to universal desolation."

There seems to have been some confusion in Burke's mind at times about the inviolable rights of property. In the letter already quoted, he reproaches the Duke of Bedford inasmuch as his most unworthy ancestor was a party to the surrender of Calais, which Burke calls "the key to France, and the bridle in the mouth of that power." The French may have believed that they had an inviolable right to their own soil and the key to their own country; Mr. Burke did not, apparently.

Burke illuminates the social and political ideas of the time. "The unhappy Louis XVI." he regarded as "a man of the best intentions that probably ever reigned." The famished French masses had not, however, found good intentions to be edible, but in his body politic Burke overlooked the masses. "The body politic of France existed in the majesty of its throne, in the dignity of its nobility, in the honour of its gentry, in the sanctity of its clergy,

in the reverence of its magistracy, in the weight and consideration due to its landed property." A less serious man might have been accused of poking fun at a neighbor. In the next chapter Gouverneur Morris exhibits the throne in all its majesty, the nobility in their honor and dignity, and the clergy in their sanctity.

Property, property, property, gave the rhythm to all Burke's tirades. The lower orders were a kind of property. "The laboring poor," he sagely observes, "are only poor because they are numerous." In addition to overproduction, they were becoming so insolent as to sniff at doles from their betters: "Under all the hardships of the last year, the laboring people did, either out of their direct gains, *or from charity (which it now seems is an insult to them)* in fact, fare better than they did in seasons of plenty fifty or sixty years ago." At that earlier period, however, they must have been less numerous. Very few actually die of want, he declared smoothly, and "without doubt charity to the poor is a direct and obligatory duty upon all Christians, next in order after the payment of debts, and infinitely more delightful. . . . The impossibility of subsistence of a man, who carries his labor to the market, is totally beside the question. The only question is, what is it worth to the buyer." This theory would undoubtedly interest the English worker of today.

In the face of hard times when only a few died of starvation, Mr. Burke is gratified to learn that "the exuberant display of wealth in our shops was the sight which most amazed a learned foreigner of distinction who lately resided among us: his expression, I remember,



was, 'that they seemed to be bursting with opulence into the streets.' ”

Franklin was of the opinion that the British poor might advantageously change places with the American Indian. Ireland, Burke's birthplace, the land of recurring famine, was lowest in the scale. A description of one famine, taken from a yellowed old pamphlet written by an English Quaker, would probably answer for all. Tuke, who was sent to report conditions to his Society, painted the lurid facts in the drabbest of colors; never were blood-curdling statements made with such restraint. The charity so delightful to the benevolent Mr. Burke had apparently a distressing element of uncertainty for the recipient. There is a tear in every sentence as Burke imagines the evils that may overtake the prosperous; Tuke relates his shocking facts without an emotional quiver.

“Numbers assured me that they would gladly work for their daily bread, and I heard of many instances where one quart of meal was all the remuneration that able-bodied men received for their day's work. . . . The roads in many places became as charnel-houses. . . . In the neighborhood of Clifden, one inspector of the roads caused no less than one hundred and forty bodies to be buried. . . . The corn crops, bountiful though they may be, are not sufficient to meet the landlords' claim. . . . Keepers placed over the crops, whose charges in some cases amounting to as much as the rent distrained for, must be paid by the unfortunate tenant.”

The evictions were a matter of principle, for the roofs of the hovels were often beaten in to prevent the evicted tenant taking shelter under them. “One old gray-headed

man came tottering up to us, bearing in his arms his bed-ridden wife; and putting her down at our feet, pointed in silent agony to her, and then to his roofless dwelling. . . . Death indeed must be the portion of some, for their neighbors, hardly richer than themselves, were subsisting principally on turnip tops; whilst the poorhouse is nearly forty miles distant. Turnips taken—can we say stolen?—from the fields, as they wearily walk thither, would be their only chance of support.”

Mr. Tuke feels in conscience bound to give credit where credit is due. “It may be proper to state, that nearly all of these poor people were provided by the ‘driver’ with a recommendation to the workhouse.” A slim equipment for a hike of forty miles on a long-empty stomach. “The small farmers of Ireland are, too generally rack-rented tenants, . . . and have no confidence in the justice or mercy of those who have the land in charge.” Able-bodied men earned from 6*d.* to 8*d.* a day when they had the luck to get work; the rent of an acre of land was from thirty to thirty-five shillings per annum. This explains the persistent belief of the Irish in fairies; some sort of supernatural arithmetic was necessary to work out such problems.

These horrors, of course, occurred in the worst of times, but even in the best of times “the swinish multitude” in England and France hovered on the brink of calamity. This was the only side of the system which interested Paine, while Burke was quite blind to that side. He associated with “no person who did not shudder all over, and feel a secret horror” at atrocities in France, where “ladies of the first distinction” were put to an “ignominious death.”

Burke's attack on the Revolution in *Reflexions* and Paine's defense of it in *The Rights of Man*, it is important to remember, were written when sacrilegious hands were laid on property only, and before the Revolution ran amuck in violence. Burke's Celtic imagination ran away with him as he described the glorious social, ecclesiastical, and political order in France and in England—a consecrated clergy training the nobility to rule the people in the fear of God, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before Him. To be sure, the nobles of both countries had preëmpted the land; that was a dispensation of the same divine Providence which had ordained that the poor should be a perpetual possession. Revolution was an arraignment of the divine order.

Burke's eulogies of the existing order should be read with Gouverneur Morris' gossipy diary: "Mr. Elliot [English representative] . . . groans over the state of public affairs. He tells me that while he was in the North he saved the King of Sweden, acting in the name of his court without orders. The Russian minister complained to Mr. Pitt, who said he could account for it only by supposing that Elliot was drunk; to which Elliot replied by a sharp letter, telling the minister that he had not been drunk since he had the honor of being so in his company. He tells me the history of Jackson's mission to Constantinople. Jackson's father, who is a dean, is patronized by the Duke of Leeds, who uses his house as a place of *rendez-vous* for his girls. His grace wished to bring this worthy prelate to the Bench of Bishops, and the minister was willing to oblige his grace, but finding the character too bad, he settled the matter by giving his son, a very stupid fellow, the embassy." Later on, Mr.

Morris will have much to say about the sanctity of the French clergy and the dignity of the nobility.

The whole matter, as Burke saw it, was simple: "It is a question between property and force. The property of the nation IS THE NATION." This was enlarging on the French King's view: "I am the State." The English Revolution, according to Burke, was a highly respectable affair, "called by the flower of the English aristocracy to defend its ancient constitution, AND NOT TO LEVEL ALL DISTINCTIONS," while on the other hand, by the French "scheme, a king is but a man, a queen but a woman."

"Government," Burke assumes to be "a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants. . . . Among those wants is to be reckoned the want . . . of a sufficient restraint upon their passions." The passion for food, however, is one which no contrivance of human wisdom has ever been able to restrain. Paine's faith in the people equaled Burke's faith in the aristocracy; given anything like fair play, they could be trusted to restrain their own passions. One believed that every good and perfect gift must come from the class above, the other that it must come from desire in the class below. Liberty itself was of little value as a gift of grace, but a people who so ardently desired it as to struggle for it might be trusted to grow up to its responsibilities: "Were governments to offer freedom to the people, or to show an anxiety for that purpose," Paine believed, "the offer would most probably be rejected. The purpose for which it was offered would be mistrusted. Therefore the desire must originate with and proceed from the mass of the people, and when the impression becomes universal, AND NOT BEFORE, it is the important moment for the most effectual



consolidation of national strength and greatness that can take place. While this change is working, there will appear a kind of chaos; but the creation we enjoy arose out of chaos, and our greatest blessings appear to have a confused beginning."

Slaves, even though manumitted, would be really free only when stirred by the desire for freedom: "I wish most anxiously to see my beloved America. It is the country from which all reformations must originally spring. I despair of seeing an abolition of the infernal traffic in negroes. We must push the matter farther on your side of the water. I wish that a few well instructed could be sent among their brethren in bondage; for until they are able to take their own part nothing will be done."

While in Paris, Paine had been relaying to Burke the good news of French progress toward emancipation, all unsuspecting that the tidings would not be gladly received by the man who had made the great speech for conciliation of the American colonies. Burke's defense of despotic feudalism came like a cannonade from ambush; *The Rights of Man* was the answering volley. It was dedicated to the President of the American Republic:

"I present to you a small treatise in defense of those principles of freedom which your exemplary virtue hath so eminently contributed to establish. That the rights of man may become as universal as your benevolence can wish, and that you may enjoy the happiness of seeing the new world regenerate the old." Washington's tardy response was civil but chilly.

In his *Reflexions*, Burke had exhausted the possibilities



of the language for invective; never was anguish so voluble. "All good things," he wrote, "connected with manners and with civilization, have, in this European world of ours, depended for ages on two principles . . . the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion . . . the nobility and the clergy." Those principles are not discernible in the epithets he hurled at his neighbors: "harpies," "hyenas," "scum," "dregs and offscourings of the earth," "cannibals with a cannibal philosophy." In reply, Paine reproves his manners as neither gentlemanly nor Christian:

"Among the incivilities by which nations or individuals provoke and irritate each other, Mr. Burke's pamphlet . . . is an extraordinary instance. Neither the people of France, nor the national assembly were troubling themselves about the affairs of England, or the English parliament; and why Mr. Burke should commence an unprovoked attack on them . . . is a conduct that cannot be pardoned on the score of manners, nor justified on that of policy. . . . There is scarce an epithet of abuse to be found in the English language, with which Mr. Burke has not loaded the French nation."

Burke had included in his scathing contempt the Reverend Dr. Price, who asserted the right of the English "to choose their own governors, to cashier them for misconduct, or to frame a government for themselves." With singular inconsistency, Burke denied this right on the ground of the oath of allegiance to William and Mary, when the English cashiered their predecessor for misconduct, and pledged fealty to the rulers of their own choice: "The lords spiritual and temporal, and commons,

do, in the name of the people aforesaid—most humbly and faithfully submit themselves, THEIR HEIRS AND POSTERITY FOREVER.”

Paine replied: “There never did, nor never can exist a parliament, or any description of men, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or power of binding . . . posterity ‘to the end of time.’ The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has no property in man; neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow. . . . Every generation is and must be competent to all the purposes which its occasions require. It is the living and not the dead who are to be accommodated. . . . In England it is said that money cannot be taken out of the pockets of the people without their consent. Who could authorize the parliament of 1688 to control and take away the freedom of posterity? . . .

“The circumstances of the world are continually changing, and the opinions of men change also. . . . That which may be thought right and found convenient in one age, may be thought wrong and found inconvenient in another.”

Paine claimed what was at that time true, that Burke ignorantly attributed the French revolt to animosity against the King. It was, he held, a revolt against a despotism which permeated the whole social structure: “These principles had not their origin in [the King] but in the original establishment many centuries back; they were become too deeply rooted to be removed, and the Augean stable of parasites and plunderers too abominably filthy to be cleaned by anything short of a complete

and universal revolution. . . . Between monarchy, the parliament, and the church, there was a rivalry of despotism. . . . It is power, and not principles that Mr. Burke venerates, and under this abominable depravity, he is disqualified to judge between them. . . .”

Mr. Burke had burst into a rhapsody on Marie Antoinette: “It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her . . . glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendor and joy. . . . What an heart I must have to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream, when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, and respectful love, . . . that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men. . . . I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone . . . the glory of Europe is extinguished forever. Never, never more shall we behold the generous loyalty to rank and sex, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom! The unbought grace of life, the cheap defense of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone!”

Paine let in a blast of cool air on this overheated sentiment: “Mr. Burke should recollect that he is writing history, and not PLAYS; and that his readers will expect the truth, and not the spouting rant of high-toned exclamation. When we see a man lamenting in a publication intended to be believed that ‘the age of chivalry is gone’

. . . that 'the unbought grace of life (if any one knows what it is) . . . the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone!' And all this because the quixotic age of chivalric nonsense is gone, what opinion can we form of his judgment? . . . The farce of monarchy and aristocracy in all countries is following that of chivalry, and Mr. Burke is dressing for the funeral. . . .

" 'We have rebuilt Newgate (says he) and tenanted the mansion, and we have prisons as strong as the Bastille for those who dare to libel the queen of France.' . . . Not one glance of compassion, not one commiserating reflection, that I can find throughout his book, has he bestowed on those who lingered out the most wretched of lives, a life without hope in the most miserable of prisons. . . . He is not affected by the reality of distress touching upon his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking on his imagination. He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird. Accustomed to kiss the aristocratical hand that hath purloined him from himself, he degenerates into a composition of art. . . . His hero or heroine must be a tragedy victim, expiring in show, and not the real prisoner of misery, sliding into death in the silence of a dungeon."

Before the hurricane assault on the Bastille—that tomb of the intellect of France, as Morris called it—the King's brother, Comte d'Artois, was discovered in a plot to bring in foreign troops for the destruction of the National Assembly. Burke, says Paine, "never speaks of plots *against* the Revolution, and it is from these plots that all the mischiefs have arisen. . . . Examples are not wanting to show how dreadfully vindictive and cruel are all old governments, when they are successful



against what they call a revolt. . . . The exiles who fled from France, fled in consequence of the miscarriage of this plot. No plot was formed against them: it was they who were plotting against others, and those who fell met not unjustly the punishment they were preparing for others. Will Mr. Burke say, that if this plot had succeeded, the successful party would have restrained their wrath so soon? . . .

“In the tremendous breaking forth of a whole people, in which all degrees, tempers, and characters are confounded, and delivering themselves by a miracle of exertion, is it to be expected that nothing will happen? When men are sore with the sense of oppressions, and menaced with new ones, is the calmness of philosophy . . . to be looked for?”

Burke had improved the opportunity to throw out a warning hint to English agitators who were lacking in respect for their anointed sovereign, reminding them of the fate of the Reverend Hugh Peters, who impiously rejoiced at the death of Charles I.: “They dealt at the restoration, PERHAPS, TOO HARDLY with this poor good man.” The poor good man was in fact disemboweled and his entrails burned before his dying eyes; in spite of which, Burke maintained that the atrocities of the French revolutionists had never been equaled among “the savages of Onondaga.” For a man who “shuddered with horror” at the excesses of the French long before they had really warmed up to their work, “perhaps” was a strange qualification.

Paine detested revenge; cruelty was an insult to the dignity of man. Who, he asks, had trained the people in cruelty? “Upon this mode of punishment Mr. Burke



builds a great part of his tragic scenes. Let us therefore examine how men came by the idea of punishing in this manner. They learn it from the governments they live under; and retaliate the punishments they have been accustomed to behold. The heads stuck upon pikes, which remained for years upon the Temple Bar, differed nothing in the horror of the scene from those carried about on pikes in Paris; yet this was done by the English government. It may perhaps be said, that it signifies nothing to a man what is done to him after he is dead; but it signifies much to the living: It either tortures their feelings, or hardens their hearts. . . . It instructs them how to punish when power falls into their hands.

“Lay then the axe to the root and teach governments humanity. It is their sanguinary punishments which corrupt mankind. In England, the punishment in certain cases is by *hanging, drawing and quartering*; the heart of the sufferer is cut out and held up to the view of the populace. In France under the former government the punishments were not less barbarous. Who does not remember the execution of Damien, torn to pieces by horses? The effect of these cruel spectacles . . . is to destroy tenderness, or excite revenge. . . . It is over the lowest class of mankind that government by terror is intended to operate, and it is on them that it operates to the worst effect. . . . They inflict in their turn the examples of terror they have been instructed to practice. . . . These outrages were not the effect of the principles of the revolution, but of the degraded mind that existed before the revolution. . . . Place them then to their proper cause (Mr. Burke) and take the reproach of them to your own side.”

Paine corrects Burke's statements regarding events of which he had been an eyewitness, or had been informed by La Fayette, whose version he recites at some length. La Fayette's testimony could hardly have been impressive to Burke, who branded our national friend as "a horrid ruffian," debauched with the cannibal philosophy of the democracy. Said Burke: "We look with *awe* to kings—with affection to parliaments—with reverence to priests, and with respect to the nobility." This of course provoked Paine's derision: "If those to whom power is delegated do well, they will be respected; if not they will be despised. . . . Mr. Burke talks of nobility; let him show what it is. The greatest characters the world has known rose on the democratic floor. . . . Every man is a proprietor in society, and draws on the capital as a matter of right. . . . I become irritated at the attempt to govern mankind by force and fraud, as if they were knaves or fools, and can scarcely avoid feeling disgust for those who are thus imposed upon."

Burke rejoiced to say that "the people of England can see without pain or grudging, an archbishop precede a Duke. They can see a Bishop of . . . Winchester in possession of ten thousand pounds a year." This is all beside the point, Paine retorts; the question is whether the people of England can see "without pain and grudging a Bishop of Winchester in possession of ten thousand pounds a year, and a curate on thirty or forty pounds a year or less? No, Sir, they certainly cannot see these things without great pain and grudging."

Burke and Paine fought over the whole arena of human affairs. Burke could see in the Revolution only a new orientation menacing to Europe and to the whole

human race: "They have a determined hatred to all privileged orders. . . . The portentous comet of the rights of man . . . from its horrid hair shakes pestilence and war." He extolled benevolent feudalism as exemplified in the glorious history of England. Paine went over the same historical ground, and found the view much less pleasing. English royalty was exhibited in undress from William the Conqueror, "the son of a prostitute and the plunderer of England," down to the imported Dutch and Hanoverian families, dull-witted and less able than the constable of many an English hamlet. The world was waking up to the fact that the privileged orders were an expensive nuisance: "All the great services that are done in the world are performed by voluntary characters, who accept no pay for them." What king could measure up to the stature of that great international hero, George Washington? "The character and services of this gentleman are sufficient to put all those men called kings to shame. . . . I presume that no man in his sober senses will compare the character of any of the kings of Europe, with that of General Washington." Certainly no intelligent reader of Morris' diaries would consider this exaggerated praise.

The battle of words was long and fierce; the cause of the conflict was fully stated in one sentence by Burke: "This is a war against a system." On this one point only the belligerents agreed, and both sides lined up for the struggle. Royalty, from the Empress of Russia to the little princelings, greeted Burke's *Reflexions* with loud applause. The masses everywhere hailed Paine as the reincarnation of St. George; the dragon was doomed, and they burst into exultant song. "The swinish multitude,"

as Burke contemptuously called them, assailed him with squeals and grunting; volumes could be gathered of the derisive doggerel which gave vent to popular feeling. A revised national anthem was sung lustily:

Great George our king we own,  
Each on his marrow bone,  
Englishmen true.  
He shall ride over us.  
Happy and glorious  
Freedom! Victorious  
Freedmen ne'er knew.

Long live our n-o-b-l-e king.  
To him our guineas bring,  
Gen'rous and free!  
Let it our hearts elate,  
Still to support the great.  
Proud of our low estate  
Still let us be!

The chorus to another song proclaimed:

And demanding freedom all,  
While kings combine  
We boldly join,  
Nor cease till tyrants fall.

Among this class, *The Rights of Man* was more appreciated than the *Reflexions*:

The bold Rights of Man struck such terror and fear,  
That stern proclamations in all parts appear;  
But deter us they can't—for as Friends we'll agree  
The State to reform—and will dare to be free.

To conclude, Here's success to honest Tom Paine:  
May he live to enjoy what he well does explain.  
The just Rights of Man may we never forget;  
For they'll save Britain's friends from the bondage of Pitt.

A bolder champion to engage  
 Falsehood had never found;  
 Resplendent truth illumined each page,  
 And flashed conviction round.  
 Soon as this mighty work began,  
 All nature echo'd Rights of Man.

The Irish joined the singsong:

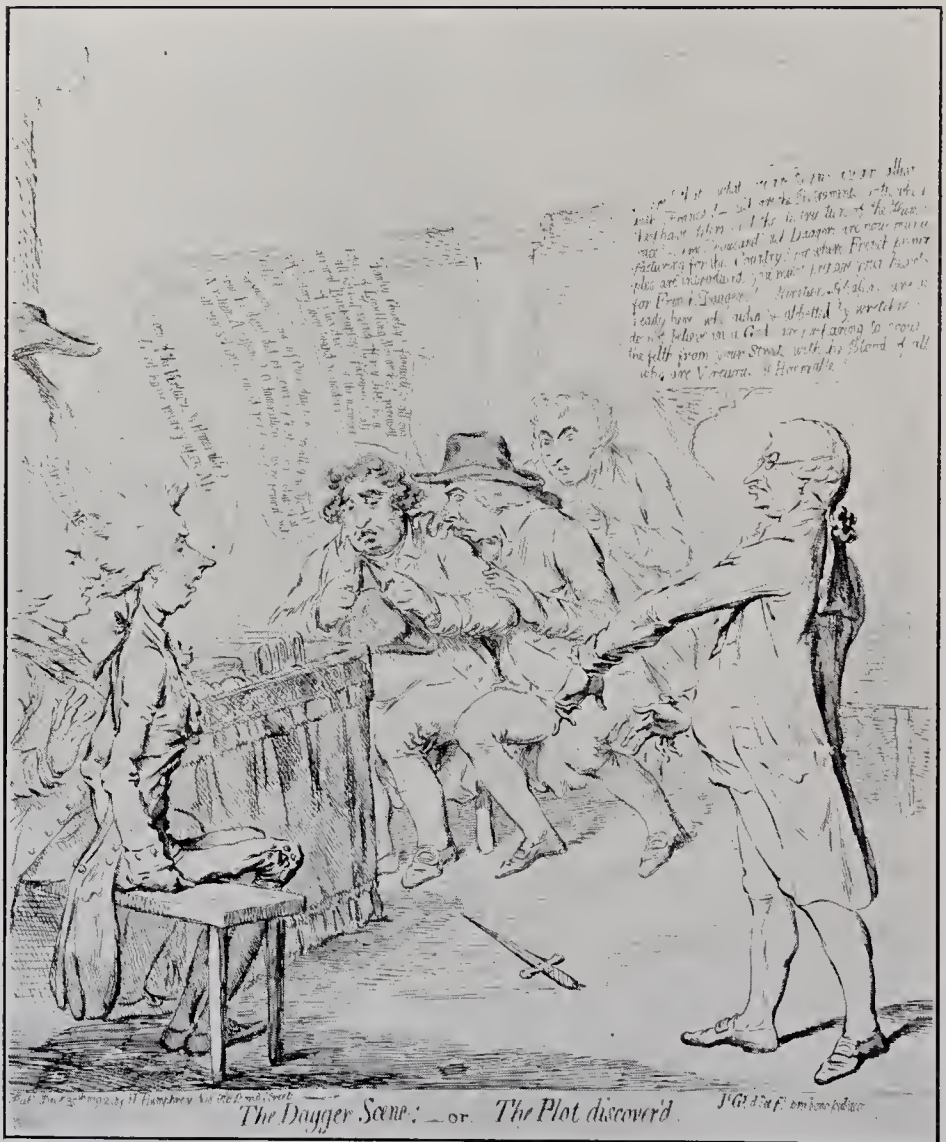
If your king pick the quarrel—why, you wear the laurel;  
 That is, if you bring back your head!  
 You know my dear cr'ature, your brother's your foe,  
 And his throat you must cut, if your king tells you so.  
 What though he ne'er gave you a word of offense,  
 He goes to perdition for statesmen's ambition;  
 What matter? Yet Paine won't allow this to be Common Sense.

That's the book that's been cramming your nob;  
 You'll never hear Paddy complain;  
 Whist, whist, hububoo, dililoo,  
 To be sure a great rogue is Tom Paine.

The hubbub was tremendous. Thirteen thousand copies of the *Reflexions* were sold to the respectables; one hundred thousand copies of *The Rights of Man* circulated among the song-singing swinish multitude. Delighted radicals toasted Edmund Burke for starting the good work. A mob of "well-bred" hoodlums, in the name of church and king, looted the house of Dr. Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen. They were incited to riot by Priestley's statement that the French Revolution would "result in the enlargement of liberty, the melioration of society, and the increase of virtue and happiness." Opinions were a dangerous possession, but men were not lacking with the courage to defend them. The great Dr. Parr, in the face of Priestley's plight, declared that the mob which attacked him stood for "a church without a gospel







### BURKE'S RUSH OF BLOOD TO THE IMAGINATION

Throwing a dagger on the floor of the House of Commons, Burke pictured the blue blood dripping from ten thousand daggers which he was persuaded were being manufactured in Birmingham for the purpose. Brinsley Sheridan slipped a lump of icy humor into Burke's heated effusion and raised gales of laughter in the House: "You have thrown down the knife. Where is the fork?" (Courtesy New York Public Library.)

and a king above the law." The respectable mob destroyed Priestley's books and scientific instruments valued at thousands of pounds. Life was becoming increasingly difficult for the politically and theologically heterodox; Priestley was refused government permission to sail with Captain Cook on a voyage of exploration because of his Unitarian beliefs. Benjamin Franklin had given him his start with an electrical library, and he now thought it wise to remove himself and his undesirable opinions to the State of Pennsylvania.

Meanwhile the merry war went on; the respectable faction burned Paine in effigy, a corset under his arm, while his faction roared out the familiar tune to the words:

God save great Thomas Paine,  
His Rights of Man proclaim  
From pole to pole.

Paine had some admirers, however, even in circles of the highest respectability. Fox found *The Rights of Man* "as clear and simple as the first rule in arithmetic"—praise which may have had in it a glint of malice. Fox had been the victim of the efficient system of bribery which worked like well-oiled machinery. Noble and subservient lords, for mythical services, received from the crown five or six thousand pounds a year; this was the scandal of the Civil List, and Paine's favorite target. As assistant Lord of the Treasury, Fox, who in the King's opinion was utterly devoid of "every principle of common honor and honesty . . . as contemptible as he is odious," had voted against one of his Majesty's measures. Lord North was instructed to make the young man sensible of his "presumption," which he managed to do in few and decisive

words: "Sir: his Majesty has thought proper to order a new commission of the treasury to be made out, in which I do not see your name." Fox was not cured of his presumption; while booksellers were jailed for selling it, he endorsed the *Rights*.

Paine was in high spirits; *Common Sense* had stirred up a great commotion in America with glorious results. He believed the commotion caused by *The Rights of Man* would end as happily for England. Burke was irritated and rancorous; he disdained "to attempt in the smallest degree to refute [the principles]. This will most probably be done (if such writings shall be thought to deserve any other refutation than that of criminal justice) by others, who may think with Mr. Burke and with the same zeal." Burke was less discreet than zealous, Paine retorted: "Pardoning the pun, it must be criminal justice indeed that should condemn a work as a substitute for not being able to refute it."

Noble lords who thought with Mr. Burke, and with the same zeal, organized meetings all over the kingdom; the honorable gentlemen assured one another that "he [Paine] is the enemy of us all." Paine busied himself writing letters to the chairmen of these meetings, admitting that he was the enemy of all parasites and placemen, and ridiculing the noble gentlemen for inviting audiences to condemn a book which they were prohibited from reading. That they might be able to condemn it intelligently, he furnished copies for free distribution at conservative meetings. On the one hand petitions rolled in to the King begging that the pamphlet be suppressed; on the other, Paine was deluged with requests for permission to reprint and distribute the *Rights*.

Realizing that it would provoke the government to action, and "having no object in view but the happiness of mankind," he boldly resolved on mass production, thus reducing the cost of printing, and bringing the work within the reach of the poorest. None of his expectations were disappointed; everybody read the book, and the government brought an indictment against the author:

"Thomas Paine, late of London, *gentleman*, being a wicked, malicious, seditious, and ill-disposed person, and being greatly disaffected to our said sovereign Lord the now King, and to the happy constitution and government of this kingdom . . . to bring them into hatred and contempt . . . wickedly, maliciously, and seditiously did write and publish, a certain false, scandalous, malicious, and seditious libel of and concerning the said late and happy Revolution." As the late happy revolution had occurred a century back, the libel was a bit tardy.

The indictment goes on and extracts from *The Rights of Man* the real sting: "'The time is not very distant [it quotes] when England will laugh at itself for sending to Holland, Zell, or Brunswick for men' (meaning the said King William the Third and King George the First), 'at the expense of a million a year, who understood neither her laws, her language, nor her interest, and whose capacities would scarcely have fitted them for the office of a parish constable. If government can be trusted to such hands, it must be some easy and simple thing indeed; and materials fit for all the purposes may be found in every town and village in England.' . . . To this information the defendant hath appeared, and pleaded Not Guilty, and thereupon issue is joined." It



was an issue in which the whole nation, even the whole world, joined.

The government had done its best to avoid publicity; the publisher had offered Paine a magnificent sum for all rights in the manuscript, which he refused, suspecting an official ruse to kill it. The trial was called for June, and Paine appeared to conduct his own defense. Luckily for him, it was postponed till December; the six months' slip between the cup and the lip saved him from a traitor's doom. Nothing would have given him more pleasure than to beard the British lion in his den, but circumstances intervening, he could only bark his defiance across the Channel.

In the interval before he left he was fully occupied in writing to government officials, heckling noble lords, and supplying the country with copies of the suppressed *Rights*. He discovered that the suppression of the publication had the effect of "exciting curiosity. . . . The object of all curiosity is knowledge. . . . It was necessary that every man, for his own satisfaction, should exercise his proper rights, and read and judge for himself." Readers would find that his work, "far from being inflammatory . . . licentious, and profligate . . . abounds with principles of government that are incontrovertible . . . with plans for the increase of commerce—for the extinction of war—for the education of the children of the poor—for the comfortable support of the aged . . . in short for the promotion of everything that can benefit the moral, civil, and political condition of man."

To reduce taxes and to prevent war, he suggested a drastic limitation of armament, and proposed a League of Nations, giving credit for the idea to Henry IV. of

France. To the charge of the indictment he answered:

"If to expose the fraud and imposition of monarchy, and every species of hereditary government . . . to extirpate the horrid practice of war; to promote universal peace, civilization, and commerce, and to break the chains of political superstition, and raise degraded man to his proper rank;—if these things be libelous, let me live and die a libeler, and let the name of libeler be engraved on my tomb." His desire came near to speedy fulfillment.

He was tried by a special, or as we should say, a packed jury, hand-picked by the government. Against this iniquity he took a crack: "Put a country right, and it will soon put a government right. Among the improper things acted by the government in the case of special juries, on their own motion, one has been that of treating a jury with a dinner . . . afterwards giving each jurymen two guineas, *if a verdict be found for the prosecution*, and only one if otherwise." With that extra guinea the government insured peace of mind; it was a consideration to professional jurymen.

"I do not consider the prosecution as particularly levelled against me," Paine affirmed, "but against . . . the right of every man of investigating systems and principles of government, and showing their several excellencies or defects. If the press is only free to flatter government as Burke has done . . . such freedom is no other than that of Spain, Turkey or Russia."

The Attorney General stated with naïve candor that no action had been taken against Part I of *The Rights of Man*, inasmuch as the price of three and six at which it was sold confined it to "judicious readers." Part II, by far the most reprehensible portion of the work, had,

“with an industry incredible, been ushered into the world in all shapes and sizes, and thrust into the hands of *subjects of every description*.” The Attorney General feared that the lower orders were not “judicious readers.”

In a famous sentence Paine warned the prosecution that their precautions were futile: “IT IS A DANGEROUS ATTEMPT IN ANY GOVERNMENT TO SAY TO A NATION, ‘THOU SHALT NOT READ.’ . . . Thought by some means or other is got abroad in the world, and cannot be restrained, though reading may.”

He had the effrontery to request the Attorney General to read his letter in court. Perhaps as a ruse to that end, which, to the consternation of his lawyers, was successful, he referred to the royal family as “Mr. Guelph and his profligate sons.” The statement was not far out of the way as to fact; it is doubtful whether it had any influence on the verdict, though it gave the prosecutor an opportunity to register a dramatic shock. The jury knew what they were there for; hungry for the prospective dinner and eager to pocket the golden guineas, they politely assured the Attorney General that he might if so inclined spare himself the exertion of summing up the case for the Crown; they had already decided on the verdict: Guilty of high treason. Paine, who had meantime gone to France, was now an outlaw.

## Chapter XII

### EMANCIPATING THE WORLD

Paine, rebellious staymaker, unkempt, who feels that he, a single needleman, did by his *Common Sense* pamphlet, free America;—that he can and will free all this world; perhaps even the other. . . .

It is not to taste sweet things; but to do noble and true things, and vindicate himself under God's heaven as a God-made man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, the dullest day-drudge kindles into a hero.—CARLYLE.

THAT area of the globe which described itself as the civilized world was thrown into a frenzy by the French Revolution. Every man who could be moved by an impersonal consideration, who had an aspiration beyond the belly's need, was for or against it. It was a rising of peoples against powers. The bitterness between the contending parties in America came near to putting the young republic on the rocks; Washington feared "a formidable insurrection."

England was panic-stricken; no one took it so much to heart as Burke. Fanny Burney wrote that when the French Revolution was mentioned in his presence he assumed the attitude of a man about to defend himself against murderers. He had a dramatic seizure in the House of Commons; drawing from his bosom a dagger, he threw it on the floor. The swinish multitude of England, he maintained, had armed themselves with thousands of those weapons with intent to cut the throats of

their betters. The garrison of the Tower of London was reënforced, all to the scornful amusement of Charles Fox. "Can you not prosecute Mr. Paine without an army?" he queried. In their terror the European powers did what they could to cripple the Revolution; the final result of all their plotting was Napoleon Bonaparte, who gave them real cause for alarm. They would in all probability have fared better if the Revolution had been permitted to work itself out. Paine considered himself an authority on revolutions, and volunteered some excellent advice to old-timers. In a world of progress changes are inevitable; it is unwise to attempt to block them. Changes in government may be effected "without convulsion or revenge. It is not worth making changes or revolutions, unless it be for some great national benefit, and when this shall appear to a nation, the danger will be, as in America and France, to those who oppose."

It was the determination of the privileged classes not to let go which made revolutions brutal and sanguinary: "As it is not difficult to perceive, from the enlightened state of mankind, that hereditary governments are verging to their decline, and that revolutions on the broad basis of national sovereignty, and government by representation, are making their way in Europe, it would be an act of wisdom to anticipate their approach, and produce revolutions by reason and accommodation, rather than commit them to the issue of convulsions."

Acts of anticipatory wisdom were, and still are, rare; Lord Brougham's description of George III. described a whole class. The King was a man of exemplary "domestic habits," he writes, "but the instant that his prerogative was concerned, or his bigotry interfered with, or his will



thwarted, the most bitter animosity, the most calculating coldness of heart, the most unforgiving resentment, took possession of his whole breast."

A change was now inevitable, for the serfdom of the European masses appears to have been but little improvement on the condition of black slaves in America. Morris describes the filthy, ragged creatures he saw: "If freedom were given to these people, they would, I think, sink back into the level of our copper colored brethren." Franklin, as we have already seen, was of the opinion that the English masses had sunk below that level. Even in 1812 an English soldier or sailor could be hanged for begging without permission from his superior officer.

The fatal determination of the despotic class to hold on as with a death grip to every archaic privilege steadily enraged the French people. To do him justice, that busy intriguer, Gouverneur Morris, attempted to inject a little Yankee common sense into the minds of his aristocratic friends. "The French are, I am afraid too rotten for a free government," Monciel told him. Morris suggested loosening up a bit as an experiment; "despotism still remains as a final resort." But the vogue for American ideas had passed; Comte de Montmorin says "the Emigrants will hear of nothing but the ancient system. If this is insisted on we shall, I think, have warm work."

To work injury to England, French diplomacy had fed the flame of the American Revolution; the sparks started the conflagration in France. Marie Antoinette acknowledged that the policy had been suicidal. So unpopular had all things American become with the aristocrats that a tobacco deal in which Morris was interested was voted down: "I think," he wrote, "an additional

cause for their vote is hatred to America *for having been the cause of the Revolution.*" The English ruling class prudently swallowed their wrongs and stood shoulder to shoulder with the French brethren, letting bygones be bygones.

The English radicals were equally alert to the trend of events. A thousand pairs of shoes were sent over to the revolutionists with the promise of a weekly contribution. The fall of the Bastille was celebrated in England as an international Fourth of July. Morris was disgusted: "There is a party of English Jacobins who are really insufferable. If their conduct may be estimated by their conversation, they will certainly be compromised to the extreme. I do not wonder that Mr. Pinckney [American Ambassador] should have given offense by keeping such company." The least of the worries of Mr. Pinckney's insufferable associates was the compromising nature of their activities.

It was a varied assortment of valiant souls which supported the English radical movement and provoked government action. Horne Tooke, the etymologist, had already done time for publicly declaring that the English soldiers who shot down the Concord farmers had committed murder. William Blake, the mystic poet, was at one time charged in a legal document with "being a Wicked and Seditious and Evil-disposed person, and greatly disaffected to our said Lord the King." Godwin, the father-in-law of Shelley, swelled the ranks of the disaffected, and Shelley himself later on stood behind the publishers of Paine's works. *The Rights of Man* was the sacred scripture of the radical party; the possessor of a copy was a marked man; the sale of it meant fine, im-

prisonment, or Botany Bay. It was successfully bootlegged in spite of prohibition, and Paine's favorite toast before his outlawry was: "The best way of advertising good books, by prosecution." Richard Carlile, destined to spend some of his mature years in prison for publishing Paine's good books, wrote: "Many a faggot have I gathered in my youth to burn old Tom Paine. In the West of England his name became quite a substitute for that of Guy Faux."

The profits of the first part of *The Rights of Man* Paine turned over to the English radicals, who, despite the prospect of financial ruin and deportation, were in high fettle. Holcroft, one of the hunted, wrote to Godwin: "I have got it—if this do not cure my cough it is a damn perverse mule of a cough. The pamphlet—from the row— But mum—we don't sell it—oh, no—ears and eggs—verbatim, except the addition of a short preface, which as you have not seen I send you my copy.—Not a single castration (Laud be unto God and J. S. Jordan!) can I discover— Hey for the New Jerusalem! The Millennium! And peace and eternal beatitude be unto the soul of Thomas Paine."

Paine, however, was taking the opposite direction to peace and eternal beatitude. During his brief period of popularity he had hobnobbed with the men who moved the empire. With more patriotism than perspicacity, more faith in "gold pills" than in incorruptible principles, they had indulged the hope that a liberal subsidy from the Crown would enlist his trenchant quill, to coax America back to her old allegiance. For the itching palm they had a ready cure; the itch to free the whole world

was a more baffling disease, which they soon realized must be treated in isolation camps.

Paine for a time was engrossed with his bridge; the eminently respectable career which the imperialists dangled before him was not even a temptation; but the noise in France roused him out of the tranquillity in which he had hoped to end his days. Dedicating a pamphlet to La Fayette, he wrote: "When the American Revolution was established, I felt a disposition to sit serenely down and enjoy the calm. It did not appear to me that any object could afterwards arise great enough to make me quit tranquillity, and feel as I had felt before. But when principle, and not place, is the energetic cause of action, a man, I find, is everywhere the same. . . . As I have not a right to contemplate so many years of remaining life as you have, I am resolved to labor as fast as I can. . . . If you make a campaign the ensuing spring I will come and join you. . . . I hope it will terminate in the extinction of German despotism, and in establishing the freedom of all Germany. When France shall be surrounded with revolutions, she will be in peace and safety, and her taxes, as well as those of Germany will consequently become less."

Paine was not singing a solo but joining in the swelling chorus of intellectual Europe. To paraphrase an old hymn, France for the world they sang; "the Revolution of the World" was their toast. The old German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, thrilled by the news of the French outbreak, worshipfully quoted: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." While the Duke of Brunswick roared insults and threats at France and drove the revolutionists



to extremes, libertarians of all nations wished them God-speed.

Paine was elated; he saw the holy city coming down from heaven. Darkness was on the face of the deep, but the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. America might lag behind, but the "ardor of '76 was kindled in France." The great principles were marching on the horizon of the world and must conquer. Meanwhile the reply of the British government to *The Rights of Man* was a charge of treason. Paine's courage was at times little short of foolhardy, and the prospect of prodding the British lion was exhilarating. He gambled his life on the zeal and strength of his following. If all went as he hoped, a great victory for human freedom would be won; if the worst came to the worst, he would pass out in the happy belief that, like Samson, he would in his death pull down the pillars which supported the old system. Already events seemed shaping for a repetition of biblical miracles. The Bastille had crumbled before a roaring unarmed mob as the walls of Jericho fell flat before the shouting hosts of Joshua. Paine, to his great delight, was chosen to present the key of the demolished "morgue of French intellect" to President Washington, whose success had inspired the revolt in Europe. "Our very good friend the Marquis de la Fayette," he wrote the President, "has entrusted to my care the key of the Bastille . . . as a present to your Excellency. . . . I feel myself happy in being the person thro' whom the Marquis has conveyed this early trophy of the Spoils of despotism, and the first fruits of American principles transplanted to Europe, to his great master and patron. When he mentioned to me the present he intended you, my heart



leaped with joy. . . . That the principles of America opened the Bastille is not to be doubted, and therefore the key comes to the right place. . . .

"I returned from France to London about five weeks ago, and am engaged to return to Paris when the Constitution shall be proclaimed, and to carry the American flag in the procession. I have not the least doubt of the final and compleat success of the French Revolution: Little Ebbings and Flowings, for and against, the natural companion of revolutions, sometimes appear; but the full current of it, is, in my opinion, as fixed as the Gulph Stream." Later he writes: "The french Revolution is not only compleat but triumphant, and the envious despotism of this nation is compelled to own the magnanimity with which it has been conducted."

The state had postponed Paine's trial from June till December. He had appeared at the earlier date, ready to conduct his own defense; by December everything had changed. As he was generally credited with playing an important part in the American Revolution, the French were eager to secure his services as a revolutionary engineer. He was the choice of several departments of France to represent them in the Constitutional Convention, and from this plethora of honors he elected to stand for Calais—a more useful and agreeable disposition to make of his head, it seemed, on the whole, than allowing the English government to affix it to a pike. Feudalism was on trial in France, and he had some satisfaction in writing the Attorney General that "business of too much importance" detained him in France. He would be unable to attend his own trial, and "was indifferent to the result."

He had a narrow escape; the story goes that as he was taking leave of a party of his radical friends preparatory to flitting, William Blake, acting on some occult intimation, solemnly warned: "You must not go home or you are a dead man." Whatever they may have thought of the mystic poet's communications from the unseen, Paine and his friends took no chances, but made off straight for Dover. They were in a fair way to miss their boat, owing to an altercation with the port official, when Paine had the happy thought to produce from his pocket a friendly letter from President Washington. The magic name proved an effective passport and very opportune. Twenty minutes after the boat had put off, a messenger rushed into Dover with a warrant for Paine's arrest on the charge of treason.

The man who had so narrowly escaped the fangs of the law on one side the Channel was acclaimed a hero on the other side. He was given a royal salute and an escort of troops while the crowd shouted "Vive Thomas Paine," and lovely ladies pinned flowers and ribbons on him. All France embraced him metaphorically, and those who could edge near enough did so literally. The theater box reserved for "The Author of the Rights of Man" was draped with the flag of the American Republic. "It is the proudest moment of my life," Paine said, and a friend wrote that he was in high spirits, though somewhat fagged by the kissing.

The whole world seemed in step to the tune of internationalism, all hearts pulsing to the rhythm of the brotherhood of man. In the first flush of Revolutionary idealism, French citizenship had been conferred on the wise and good men of other nations, and Paine was

among the Americans so honored. Addressing his fellow citizens of the world, he said: "I receive with affectionate gratitude the honor which the late national assembly has conferred upon me, by adopting me a citizen of France; and the additional honor of being elected by my fellow citizens a member of the national convention. Happily impressed, as I am, by those testimonies of respect shown toward me as an individual, I feel my felicity increased by seeing the barrier broken down that divided patriotism by spots of earth, and limited citizenship to the soil, like vegetation. . . . I come not to enjoy repose. Convinced that the cause of France is the cause of all mankind, and that liberty cannot be purchased by a wish, I gladly share with you the dangers and honors necessary to success." In the ecstasy of the great moment no such word as fail was thought of.

Replying to Burke's extravagant attack on the revolutionaries, Paine had argued: So long as his opponent could view with serenity the brutalities committed by his own government in official cold blood, why shudder with horror at those committed by a justly infuriated mob in the heat of passion? To the Revolutionists, however, he tactfully suggested that decapitation was a poor start for the brotherhood of man; that it was better to fill heads with new ideas than to chop them off and carry them on pikes. The old spirit of revenge, he urged, must be scrapped with the old order.

"The scene that now opens itself to France extends far beyond the boundaries of her own dominions. Every *nation* is become her colleague, and every *court* is become her enemy. It is now the cause of all nations against the



GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

Gouverneur Morris and Edmund Burke agreed that Paine would come to a fitting end on the gallows. It was not Morris' fault that he escaped that fate. Morris had a contempt for democrats and was averse to remaining in a Union which allowed Thomas Jefferson or any of the Virginia tribe to become president. "England," he wrote, "has borne an extreme pressure of war . . . yet her three per cent and our six per cent stock are selling nearly at the same price. . . . Our liberty and property will soon be buried in the same grave. We indeed, of the North and East, may save ourselves by a severance of the Union." President Washington had a high regard for Morris' ability.





cause of all courts. The terror that despotism felt, clandestinely begot a confederation of despots; and their attack upon France was produced by their fears at home. In entering on this great scene, greater than any nation has been called to act in, let us say to the agitated mind, be calm. Let us punish by instructing rather than by revenge. Let us begin the new era by a greatness of friendship, and hail the approach of union and success."

Enthusiastic idealists flocked to Paris to witness the eclipse of despotism and greet the dawn of liberty, a gathering after Paine's own heart. The English poet Wordsworth was chummy with Robespierre, a promising lawyer who had resigned a lucrative judgeship in Arras rather than pronounce the death sentence on a fellow creature. Young Lord Fitzgerald sat at the feet of Paine, making ready to sacrifice his life for Ireland. Marat, physician and philosopher, well and favorably known in England, was a disciple of the Italian Conte Beccaria, crusader against cruel and unusual punishments. Brissot, friend of the blacks and a graduate of the Bastille, had just returned from America to join the inner circle and give his name to the moderate party. On hearing his sentence, the King said: "I believe Brissot would have saved me." Because others shared that belief, Brissot soon shared the King's fate. Versatile and accomplished, the chivalrous Marquis de Condorcet turned from the "acts of injustice, the crimes with which the earth is still polluted," to peer into the glorious future of humanity.

"No bounds," he wrote, "have been fixed to the improvement of human faculties; the perfectibility of man is absolutely indefinite; the progress of this perfection,

henceforth above the control of every power that would impede it, has no other limit than the duration of the globe."

La Fayette, generous and visionary, worked untiringly to steer his country into the track followed by America. Madame Roland, vivacious and attractive, enlivened the scene, and Mary Wollstonecraft flitted across it, putting in a word for the rights of woman.

In the shadow of doom, these ardent souls planned a new and happier world. Crazy dreamers all, they appeared to the more matter-of-fact; yet crazy dreamers have on occasion awakened a sleeping world, and have even, paradoxically, made it more sane. If these Paris dreamers may justly be charged with folly for their belief that a political change would right-about-face mankind and usher in the millennium, their conservative foes showed no superior wisdom in insisting that the permanence of the old order was decreed in the councils of eternity. Their blind and stupid obstinacy aided the extremists and crippled the moderates. An impartial scrutiny of history does not justify the conclusion that the dreamers have made more of a mess of human affairs than their practical critics; their great mistake has been in setting a time limit for their dreams to come true. When all is said, it cannot be denied that, though France suffered much in her delirium, the health of the nation thereafter was vastly improved. •

The glorious dream of the Paris zealots was the terrifying nightmare of Mr. Burke and his kind; he drenched them in an effervescence of contempt, "the ignorant flippancy of Thomas Paine, the presumptuous foppery of La Fayette, the impious sophistry of Condorcet." His re-

vered nobility, moreover, showed little evidence of the training of a sanctified clergy; they were quite as sanguinary as the rabble they despised and denounced. They disapproved of the custom of affixing heads to pikes only when the heads were not of their own selection. The amiable Lord Fortescue wrote the English representative in Paris: "Tom Paine is just where he ought to be—a member of the Convention of cannibals. One would have thought it impossible that any society upon the face of the globe should have been fit for the reception of such a being. . . . His vocation will not be complete, nor theirs either, till his head finds its way to the top of a pike."

Many men of many minds! Young Lord Fitzgerald, soon to lose his life in the Irish Rebellion of '98, found the radical circle in Paris inspiring. "I lodge with my friend Paine—we breakfast, dine and sup together. The more I see of his interior, the more I like and respect him. I cannot express how kind he is to me; there is a simplicity of manner, a goodness of heart, and a strength of mind in him, that I never knew a man possess before." Fitzgerald was shot down in Ireland before Paine returned to America.

For a man whose vaulting ambition it was to disturb the political equilibrium of nations, and to set new thought fashions for mankind, Paine, on the testimony of those who knew him best, was singularly responsive to personal appeal. A large impersonal benevolence for man collectively could be instantly directed to the relief of an individual man. Through all the times that tried men's fiber, their tempers and principles, as well as their souls, he never failed in those acts of personal kindness

which sweeten existence. His tenant in America died leaving a widow in straits and rent in arrears for two years. He writes to an American friend from France to call on the widow and with all possible tact and delicacy let her know that the debt has been written off.

The legend runs that when the English surrendered at Yorktown, General O'Hara pointedly ignored General Washington, and presented the symbol of defeat to Count Rochambeau. That sort of studied insolence was peculiarly irritating to Paine, more especially when the American commander-in-chief was the object of it. O'Hara and Paine met as prisoners in the Luxembourg, and the impecunious Paine divested himself of all the funds he possessed to enable the haughty foe to escape.

One Zachariah Wilkes adds to the catalogue of Paine's chivalrous philanthropy. Wilkes was condemned to death during the Terror: "I had no friends here . . . no friend could have served me: Robespierre ruled." In the extremity of despair, Wilkes begged his jailer to deliver to the authorities a letter protesting his innocence. "No my friend!" answered he gaily. 'My head is as good as yours, and looks as well between the shoulders, to my liking. Why not send it to Deputy Paine?'

"O God! he must hate the name of Englishman: pelted, insulted, persecuted, plundered." The jailer was firm; he would deliver a note to Paine, and to no other.

"Do then!" said I wildly. 'One man shall know of my innocence.' He came within the half hour. I told him my employers were Watt and Boulton of Birmingham. . . . He replied: 'There are no two men less favorable to the principles I profess, but no two upon earth are honester.' . . . He examined me closer than my judges had



done . . . then said, 'The leaders of the Convention would rather have my life than yours. If by any means I can obtain your release on my own security, will you promise me to return within twenty days?' . . . He returned in the earlier part of the evening, looked fixedly upon me, and said: 'Zachariah Wilkes! If you do not return . . . you will be the most unhappy of men; for had you not been an honest one you would not be the agent of Watts and Boulton. I do not think I have hazarded much in offering to take your place on your failure: such is the condition.' I was speechless . . . my temples ached and tears had not yet relieved them. He said, 'Zachariah! follow me to the carriage.' The soldiers paid the respect due to his scarf, presenting arms, and drawing up in file as we went along." Paine was evidently in the bad books of the extremists at the time, and merely to plead for the life of an Englishman, a rank stranger to him, was undoubtedly taking a great risk.

Paine's most conspicuous adventure in quixotic knight-errantry was his stupendous exertion to save the life of the man whose power he was bent on destroying. At the time of Burke's hysterical outburst against the Revolution, no injury had been offered the French King, other than the assumption by the people of the right to curtail his power; the revolutionary party planned to make him its honorary head. "The French constitution," wrote Paine, "distinguishes between the king and the sovereign; it considers the station of the king official, and places sovereignty in the nation." It was precisely this shifting of sovereignty which threw Burke and his party into a state of feverish anxiety. The English King was extremely unpopular with a people who aforesaid had



arrogated to themselves sovereignty, with most unhappy consequences to the reigning house. King George had little reason to love King Louis, who had assisted in diminishing his possessions, but against the rising tide of democracy the royal brotherhood must erect a break-water of class solidarity. Burke secretly advised Marie Antoinette to throw herself on the protection of her neighbors; the American royalist, Morris, also volunteered a counsel of duplicity. The distracted lady was ill advised by these practical politicians.

At last the royal family made a flitting; La Fayette rushed to Paine's lodging with the news: "The birds have flown." Paine fervently hoped that no attempt would be made to snare them. But, like the Americans in the initial stages of their Revolution, the French were completely lost without a king; it was the political clothing to which they were accustomed, and without which they felt a sense of nakedness. Despite the efforts of the Republican Society, consisting of Paine and several of his friends, the trembling fugitives were brought back to Paris. The Republicans placarded Paris with an appeal to reason. Since the King wished to run away, why not let him run? His people were better off without him:

"The serene tranquillity, the mutual confidence which prevailed amongst us, during the time of the late king's escape, the indifference with which we beheld him return, are unequivocal proofs that the absence of the king is more desirable than his presence, and that he is not only a political superfluity, but a grievous burden, pressing hard on the whole nation. . . . The nation can never give back confidence to a man who, false to his trust, perjured to his oath, conspires a clandestine flight, ob-

tains a false passport, conceals a king of France under the disguise of a valet, directs his course toward a frontier covered with traitors and deserters, and evidently meditates a return into our country, with a force capable of imposing his own despotic laws. . . . He no longer holds any authority. We owe him no longer obedience. We see in him no more than an indifferent person; we regard him only as Louis Capet. . . .

"The thirty millions which it cost to support a king in the eclat of stupid brutal luxury, presents us with an easy method of reducing the taxes, which reduction would at once release the people, and stop the progress of political corruption. The grandeur of nations consists, not as kings pretend in the splendor of thrones, but in a conspicuous sense of their own dignity, and in a just disdain of those barbarous follies and crimes, which, under the sanction of royalty have hitherto desolated Europe."

The Republicans had not yet made the disheartening discovery that crime and corruption were more securely enthroned than the most powerful monarchs of the world. As for M. Louis Capet, they were confident national pride would protect him; dethroned and defenseless, no evil should come nigh him:

"As to the personal safety of Louis Capet, it is so much the more confirmed, as France will not stoop to degrade herself by a spirit of revenge against a wretch who has dishonored himself. In defending a just and glorious cause, it is not possible to degrade it, and the universal tranquillity which prevails is an undeniable proof, that a free people know how to respect themselves." The problem, it turned out, was to find a free people in the picture of European serfdom.

The conviction that the French would naturally model their Revolution on the American pattern proved disastrous. Not only Paine, but La Fayette and the Europeans who had ridden the storm through which America came safe to port, were intoxicated by the idea of steering France over the same course. Unfortunately their reckoning was faulty. America was born and bred in rebellion; her people by all the circumstances of pioneer life were self-reliant, accustomed to teamwork, and endowed with a considerable amount of hard common sense. They had never been crazed by hunger; in defiance of the old saw, it was their habit to holler before they were hurt, and they had no long years of suppression to work off. They were divided into rival parties, and torn by the jealousies and suspicions inevitable to any great collective undertaking; but on the whole the leaders trusted each other, and were trusted by the people. In times of panic there was sufficient moral solvency in the country to meet all outstanding obligations, and tide over the emergency.

France, on the contrary, had long been morally insolvent; hatred, suspicion, and revenge are poor securities for a better social order. As the submerged class came to the top, they grasped what they could get of the wreckage. The motto of all classes was each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. "I am willing to try to save the king," said Danton when Louis was to be tried, "but I must have a million to buy up the necessary votes. . . . Although I may save the king's life I shall vote for his death; I am willing to save his head, but not to lose mine." The aristocrats were equally oblivious to any but personal considerations, as De Mont-

morin frankly admitted in discussing the situation with Morris: "He tells me that he is feeble and pacific; that he will take no part for or against anybody; and if he interferes at all, it must be to get his share of the spoil."

"Our American example," writes Morris, "has done them good, but like all novelties, Liberty runs away with their discretion, if they have any." The leaders "are not possessed of talents or virtue. . . . The chief has not even courage, without which you know that in revolution there is nothing." He does not pretend to believe, however, that the class he favors as an institution of God's inscrutable wisdom is better endowed with talent, virtue, or courage.

It was inevitable in the circumstances that Paine and his courageous little circle of altruists should steadily lose ground to their more forceful antagonists; their humanitarian preachment fell on ears deafened by centuries of insult and abuse. The baser passions of men are the most violently active; the apathy and timidity of the well intentioned emboldens the more aggressive. The duplicity of the hidebound aristocrats cleared the path to power for the Terrorists; the revolutionary royalist party which had retrieved their absconding King were at that time sufficiently strong to threaten with prosecution Paine and Duchâtelet, whom they held responsible for the placards denouncing his flighty Majesty. Then the discovery of the royal plot to subdue the rebellious nation with foreign armies, and the arrogant threats of neighboring despots, changed the whole temper of the people. "The kings of Europe would challenge us," shouted fiery Citizen Danton; "we throw them the head of a king."

It is necessary to make a digression at this point for

two reasons: first, because the American Minister in Paris played an important rôle in this period of incredible chaos, and exercised a sinister influence on the fate and fame of Paine; secondly, by piecing the conflicting stories of these two men together, we get a bird's-eye view of one of the great earthquakes of history. There was a wandering knight-errant streak in Paine, but a perusal of Gouverneur Morris' story leaves the reader convinced that he did not put in his time tilting at wind-mills.



## Chapter XIII

### A YANKEE TORY IN PARIS

Patrician, aristocrat, Tory—whatever his age or name,  
To the people's rights and liberties, a traitor ever the same.  
The natural crowd is a mob to him, their prayer a vulgar rhyme;  
The free man's speech is sedition, and the patriot's deed a crime;  
Whatever the race, the law, the land,—whatever the time or  
throne,—

The Tory is always a traitor to every class but his own.

—JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY.

THE astrological signs were certainly adverse to Paine when Thomas Jefferson left France and Gouverneur Morris was sent over by the President on a special mission. The appointment was so unpopular in America that Washington warned Morris to watch his step, and so unfortunate in Paine's opinion that he frankly expressed his misgivings to the gentleman himself. Morris was an extremely class-conscious member of the landed gentry, "an exotic in a republic," said his friend Alexander Hamilton. He was an accomplished man of the world, able, cool, cynical, shrewd, and courageous, skilled in finance and finesse; and judging by his own record of intrigue, Machiavelli could have given him few points. He took to the life of the French court like a cow to clover; his diary is an entertaining and illuminating paradox, his sympathies all with the privileged class, his facts all against them. It is an unrelieved record of the grossness, cupidity, imbecility, indecency, and incest of European royalty and aristocracy. Ultra-democrats

would undoubtedly find in its pages a complete vindication of Paine's exuberant zeal for the destruction of that order which, with all its faults, Morris loved. "There is but one sovereign in Europe—the Empress of Russia—who is not in the scale of talents considerably below par." Nevertheless he has no sympathy with the revolt against such rulers, and piously observes anent a proposed French regency: "Of course they must go on with the miserable creature which God has given them. His wisdom will doubtless produce good by ways to us inscrutable, and on that we must repose." He was not backward in supplementing the divine wisdom, which must have become more inscrutable to him as time went on.

Morris detested Paine's politics and abhorred his candor as unpardonable impudence. He was of Burke's political complexion, without that statesman's warmth or his sentimentality, but with more hard sense and humor; an anti-democratic, court-loving aristocrat who believed in a free government under the dictatorship of the privileged class. To both men it was a matter of course that rank and property should rule the swinish multitude; their sociological creed was almost identical. "On these two pillars, property and luxury," avers Morris, "or to call them by apposite but not gentle names, avarice and sensuality, firmly fixed, the arch of national wealth would be reared high by the hand of labor; it would be polished by science, decorated by the arts, and fitted for the footstool of freedom." It did not occur to him that those who had reared the arch might develop the nerve and muscle to wreck it.

A keen observer, nevertheless, of the emotional surges which made the French Revolution what it was, he has

thrown on the screen an unsurpassed panorama of the great tragedy. As keen as Burke for the preservation of the established order, he indulges in no rhapsodical nonsense. He makes fearful havoc of Burke's picture of the majesty of the throne, the dignity of the nobility, the honor of the gentry, and the sanctity of the clergy. A young nobleman assured him "that the king is by nature cruel and base . . . that he used to spit and roast cats alive." This gossip, Morris confided to his inamorata, Madame de Flahaut, was more than he could easily swallow, but she "tells me when young he was guilty of such things; that he is very brutal and nasty. . . . Until lately he used to spit in his hand, as being more convenient. It is no wonder that such a beast should be dethroned."

That time softened his indignation is proved by a courtier-like letter written subsequently to the Princess of France: "Thus will your royal highness be shown how necessary it is to keep secret all that concerns so closely the best and most unfortunate of kings." Mr. Morris begs her royal Highness to accept the homage of his inviolable attachment, and assures her he realizes the anxiety of the King for the happiness of his people; "but I have no confidence in the morals of the people. . . . Alas! they are not in a state of mind to receive good from his hands. Suspicion, that constant companion of vice and weakness, has loosened every band of social union." He ignores the factor of chronic starvation, and though he records the fact that those in power were involved "in the great speculations of grain made in the neighborhood of Paris," he does not relate it to the suspicious hordes of gaunt women carrying starving babies. He comes in time

to believe that the King was dethroned "for trivial causes."

As Morris sketches her, Marie Antoinette appears a bird of different plumage from the heavenly dove of Burke's rhapsody, fluttering over but hardly deigning to alight on this distressed planet. "I tell [Madame de Flahaut] that she may easily command the Queen, who is weak, proud, but not ill-tempered, and, though lustful, yet not much attached to her lovers." Assured by his frail friend, "with an air of confidence," that she will keep the royal lady supplied with gallants and masses, he finds it "impossible not to approve of such a régime."

His charming Madame de Flahaut was herself a standing commentary on the sanctity of the clergy; not her husband, but the Bishop of Autun, was the father of her son. The good Bishop's extensive seraglio included Madame de Staël, though that public-spirited dame seemed inclined to make a place for the American Minister. The wary Mr. Morris sidetracked many, but not all, such overtures with infinite discretion. "Simolin . . . tells me a thing which surprises me, viz., that the Bishop used to beat Madame de Staël. . . . St. Foix having heard it, asked the Bishop, who acknowledged it."

Morris grew less provincial as time went by: "On the score of morals . . . the Bishop is particularly blamed . . . not so much for adultery, because that was common enough among the clergy of high rank, but for the variety and publicity of his amours, for gambling, and above all, for stock jobbing." Morris was a more cautious Don Juan; he writes, while on a visit to the German court: "During the course of the evening Countess Lichtenau [mistress of the Crown Prince of Prussia]



. . . lets me see that I am welcome to make my approaches, but one must not have too many irons in the fire at once." His restraint may be accounted for by "our milder American manners," since the lady in her jealous rages sometimes hurled a bottle at the head of her royal lover.

The American was not impressed by the dignity of the nobility: "The aristocrats burning with the lust of vengeance, most of them poor and all of them proud, hope that, supported by foreign armies, they shall be able to return victorious, and reëstablish that species of despotism most suited to their own cupidity. It happens therefore that the whole nation, though with different views, are desirous for war; for it is proper in such general statements to take in the spirit of the country, which has ever been warlike." By comparison with the French, American mobs began to look respectable: "America at the worst of times was much better, because at least the criminal law was executed, not to mention the mildness of our manners."

While Morris thoroughly enjoyed the life of the French Court, he sometimes found it a bit too gamy even for his sophisticated taste; raised in a cleaner, greener land, the air seemed rather fetid; almost, the imbecility of his noble friends persuaded him to condone the brutality of their executioners. "Indeed the conversation of these gentlemen who have the virtue and good fortune of their grandfathers to recommend them, leads me almost to forget the crimes of the French Revolution; and often the unfortunate temper and sanguinary wishes they exhibit makes me almost believe that the assertion of their enemies is true, viz., that it is success alone which



determined on whose side should be the crimes and on whose the misery."

Still, with the faith that moves mountains, he supported his class: "Whatever may have been the origin of great families, in the course of ages some of their members have shed on each a splendor which awes the vulgar. . . . Such families are generally more fair and upright in their conduct than others. Be it the effect of education . . . or let it result from that affluence which places them above temptation . . . such conduct must impress on others deep sentiments of respect." This fine sentiment is embedded in a tale of aristocratic bribery, corruption, and sordid avarice which would disgrace a mob of hungry beggars.

He frankly admits that "the noblesse, who . . . possess neither the force, the wealth nor the talents of the nation have rather opposed pride than argument to their assailants. Hugging the dear privileges of centuries long lapsed they have clamored about the *Court*, while their adversaries have possessed themselves fully of the public confidence everywhere." The peculiarities of the noblesse were occasionally puzzling to him: "Not long since I saw a gentleman of my acquaintance weep at the opera, who heard a beggar clatter his crutches in pursuit of him for the length of the street without turning round." In fairness to Morris, it must be said that he wasted a great deal of excellent Yankee advice on his noble friends.

With all his prejudices, Morris could tell a straightforward story. The Bastille had fallen; a triumphant mob paraded the streets carrying the decapitated head of the governor: "Nearly eighty thousand men, with

scarcely the semblance of a leader had got together. A horde armed and desperate filled the avenues leading to this prison, fortress and tomb. . . . I presume this day's transaction will induce a conviction that all is not perfectly quiet." But a courtier tells him he believes the disturbances in Paris "are very trifling," and "the king ate a very hearty supper last night. Who will say that he wants fortitude?"

Confident of the support of foreign troops, the King's brother was equally debonair: "During the . . . tumult and horror in Paris, when the body of Du Launay, after being kicked and dragged through the gutter, and his head carried on a pike . . . in the Place de Grève, the Comte d'Artois at Versailles held high carnival in the orangery and, with dances, songs, feasting and wines in abundance, entertained the foreign soldiery." The storm gathered in violence as the women mobilized, their famished children in their arms. "At Versailles by eleven in the morning the Comte de St. Priest knew of the approach of the mob, with the advance guard of seven or eight thousand women in the guise of Amazons: The Queen of the Halles dressed in [revolutionary] scarlet . . . and sad women with starving babies in their arms. It was a mob with many unexpressed intentions, but with a fixed unalterable resolve to find bread. The King strangely infatuated hunted that eventful day, and must be reminded of his duty. In the face of approaching calamity he found time to make an entry in his journal and to note the forty-one birds he had killed, and to comment on the interruption occasioned '*par les évènements.*' The Queen, while taking a walk—the last she ever took—in the pretty gardens of the Trianon, was

called to a realization of 'les évènements' to which she was more keenly alive than the king."

Morris describes the mob which surrounded the palace with an artist's eye for a picture, groups of gayly dressed officers and high dignitaries of the church, each wearing brilliant tokens of his rank, against a background of the people in the uniform dress of their class, "their costume of black hose and surtout and short black cloak, to which they had been condemned by the old sumptuary laws and which denoted the plebeian. . . . Proudly they carried themselves in this dress, but on their faces were care and gloomy forebodings."

Though he had lost a leg in a carriage accident, Morris was a man of nerve; courage even in the "abominable populace" excited his admiration. God in His inscrutable wisdom might, after all, bless with victory a fearless mob. He throws out this sardonic hint to an artist who invited him to view his work: "The subject is Love escaped from his cage . . . the ladies in anguish and despair. . . . I tell him he had better paint the Storm of the Bastille; it will be a more fashionable picture, and that one trait will admit of fine effect. It is that of the garde Française who, having got hold of the gate and unable to bring it down, cries to his comrades of the populace to pull by his legs. And this man has the force and courage to hold while a dozen of them pull him like a rope, and bring down the gate, so that he actually sustains the rack."

As their insistent cries for bread went unheeded, the mob grew more sullen: "We learn that the militia have at last fired on the mob, and killed a few of them. They scampered away as fast as they could. This morn-

ing, however, they massacred two men, and this evening they have, it is said, assassinated two of the militia in the street. This affair will, I think, lay the foundation of tranquillity, although a more serious affair is necessary to restrain this abominable populace." The militia merely *kill* a few of the abominable populace, while the latter massacre and assassinate. A more shaky foundation for tranquillity than this interchange it is hard to imagine.

Morris finds comfort in a tranquillizing patriotism; in the event of a European combine to shut out his country's produce, America's progress in useful manufactures would be rapid: "This alone is wanting to complete our independence; we shall then turn to a world by ourselves, and far from the wars and jars of Europe. Their various revolutions will serve merely to instruct and amuse, like the roaring of a tempestuous sea, which at a distance becomes a pleasing sound."

Brilliant and witty, with a flair for high life, and withal very rich, Morris found much to amuse him, one way and another, amid the roaring of the tempestuous sea. Though he was handicapped by a peg leg, the fairest of the frail made advances for his fastidious favor. But the American Minister flew high, occasionally casting a flirtatious eye on the Queen. "The Queen looks up at me very steadily so as to recognize me again. My air, if I can know myself, was that of calm benevolence with a little sensibility." He desires a lock of the Queen's hair, feeling sure "her Majesty will be pleased with the request even if she does not comply with it, for such is woman." It was a very amusing society, and Mr. Morris had a gratifying sense of cutting a good figure in it. The beau monde gathered in his luxuriously appointed house in



the Faubourg St. Germain to enjoy his lavish hospitality. "Tuns" of sauterne and claret, "pipes" of Madeira and port filled his cellars and exhilarated his pleasure-seeking friends. He dispensed advice as freely as hospitality, and was not niggardly in assisting the émigrés with money.

Obviously the gulf between Paine's little coterie and Morris' circle was as impassable as that which separated Dives and Lazarus. Paine despised the ruling class; Morris loathed the rabble and its leaders, not excepting Franklin, Jefferson, and La Fayette. The intrusion of Paine, a mere nobody, into world affairs was a stink in the nostrils of the aristocratic American Tory; his letters bristle with antagonism, and do not exemplify that fair and upright spirit which he claimed to be a characteristic of the well born. Morris had a keen appetite for gossip, and delighted to pass on malicious rumors, without too much curiosity as to the facts. He was in constant secret communication with the British government, and set himself to redraw the map of Europe with as much confidence as the Big Five at Versailles. When in 1792 he crossed the Channel, the French press openly accused him of acting as "an agent for the aristocrats," and they were not far beside the mark. His letters to Washington, which aroused senatorial curiosity, would undoubtedly have proved highly edifying reading to that body, though they would not have added to the national tranquillity.

When Paine and four of his friends founded the Republican Society, they announced that "its object is to enlighten people's minds on this republicanism which is calumniated because it is not understood; on the uselessness of kings, the vices and abuses of royalty that prejudice persists in defending altho they may be known."



Strange to relate, in view of his later activities, Robespierre vigorously protested against this prospectus: "The mere word [republicanism] caused division among the patriots, and gave the enemies of liberty the evidence they sought to prove that there existed in France a party which *conspired against the monarchy*."

Enlightenment takes time, while hunger is urgent. The Paris mob roaring for food, even the trudging Amazons, carrying their hunger-bawling young, had shown little animosity toward the King, when Minister Morris himself lost patience and gave him up as a bad job: "What will you have from a creature who, situated as he is, eats and drinks, sleeps well and laughs, and is as merry a grig as lives?" With the discovery that the "best intentioned king that probably ever reigned" was secretly plotting to feed his hungry people lead from the hands of foreign mercenaries, the bounds of restraint were cleared at a jump. The King was a traitor to the nation; let him die a traitor's death.

Paine was opposed to capital punishment on principle, and to the execution of the King partly out of gratitude and partly as a matter of policy, foreseeing the effect it would have in America. He could not forget, nor would he let the French forget, that Louis had been the instrument of succor to the Americans. In an intimidated Convention dominated by the ex-humanitarians, Marat and Robespierre, he made his heroic plea for mercy, using every rhetorical art to save the King's life. His speech was put into French by Condorcet, and read to the assembly.

"My hatred and abhorrence of monarchy are sufficiently known; they originate in principles of reason and

conviction, nor except with life can they ever be extirpated; but my compassion for the unfortunate, whether friend or enemy is equally lively and sincere.

"I voted that Louis should be tried, because it was necessary to afford proofs to the world of the perfidy, corruption and abomination of the monarchical system. . . . Nevertheless I am inclined to believe that if Louis Capet had been born in an amiable and respectable neighborhood, at liberty to practice the duties of domestic life . . . he would [not] have shown himself destitute of social virtues: we are, in a moment of fermentation like this, naturally little indulgent to his vices, or rather to those of monarchical government. . . .

"For myself, I seriously confess, that when I reflect on the unaccountable folly that restored the executive power to his hands, all covered as he was with perjury and treason, I am far more ready to condemn the constituent assembly than the unfortunate prisoner, Louis Capet."

The Americans, he said, regard Louis as their benefactor, a circumstance which "affords the French nation a blessed occasion of extricating itself from the yoke of kings, without defiling itself with the impurities of their blood. . . . Let then the United States be the safeguard and asylum of Louis Capet. There, hereafter, far removed from the miseries and crimes of royalty, he may learn, from the constant aspect of public prosperity, that the true system of government consists not in kings, but in fair, equal and honorable representation. . . . I submit it as a citizen of America, who feels the debt of gratitude he owes to every Frenchman. I submit it also as a man, who, although the enemy of kings, cannot forget that they are subject to human frailties."

Charles I., he argued, was beheaded by the English; yet the Stuarts returned to all their old power; by banishing James, England got rid of the dynasty forever. Policy no less than humanity was on the side of clemency; sanguinary punishment was a relic of governmental stupidity and barbarism. "It is the same punishment which has so long shocked the sight and tormented the patience of the people, that now in their turn they practice in revenge on their oppressors. But it becomes us to be strictly on our guard against the abomination and perversity of monarchical examples: as France has been the first European nation to abolish royalty, let her be also the first to abolish the punishment of death, and to find out a milder and more effectual substitute. . . . It is our duty, as legislators not to spill a drop of blood when our purpose may be effectually accomplished without it.

"I submit . . . 1st, that the national convention shall pronounce sentence of banishment on Louis and his family. 2nd, That Louis Capet shall be detained in prison till the end of the war; and at that epoch the sentence of banishment be executed."

Pandemonium broke loose and raged for two days; members who balked at the extreme penalty were themselves threatened with death. Paine brushed up enough French to dispense with the interpreter in responding to the final roll call: "I vote for the detention of Louis until the end of the war, and after that his perpetual banishment." Marat leaped up in a frenzy: "I submit that Thomas Paine is incompetent to vote on this question; being a Quaker, his religious principles are opposed

to the death penalty." "I vote against it," Paine maintained doggedly, "both morally *and* politically."

He carried a very respectable minority with him; of the seven hundred and twenty-one voters, only three hundred and eighty-seven stood out for death unconditionally. This encouraged Paine to make a final effort, and his friends in that seething assembly insisted that he have the floor. The roar died down while the interpreter read:

"Very sincerely do I regret the Convention's vote of yesterday for death. . . . It is nearly twenty years that I have been engaged in the cause of liberty, having contributed something to it in the Revolution of the United States of America. My language has always been that of liberty *and* humanity. . . . Nothing so exalts a nation as the union of those two principles, under all circumstances. I know that the public mind of France, and particularly that of Paris, has been heated and irritated by the dangers to which they have been exposed: but could we carry our thoughts into the future, when the dangers are ended . . . what may to-day seem an act of justice may then appear an act of vengeance. If, on my return to America, I should employ myself on a history of the French Revolution, I had rather record a thousand errors dictated by humanity, than one inspired by justice too severe."

The assembled members would not be long in office: "If by any act of ours the number of the nation's enemies shall be needlessly increased . . . we should not be justified for having thus unnecessarily heaped obstacles in the path of our successors. . . . France has but one ally—the United States of America. . . . It happens,



unfortunately, that the person now under discussion is regarded by Americans as having been the friend of their Revolution. I can assure you that his execution will there spread universal sorrow, and it is in your power not thus to wound the feelings of your ally. Could I speak the French language I would descend to your bar, and in their name become your petitioner to respite the execution of the sentence on Louis."

Again an infuriated interruption from Marat: "This is not the language of Thomas Paine. I denounce the interpreter." Members sustained the interpreter, and the reading went on to the last futile appeal: "Your executive committee will nominate an Ambassador to Philadelphia; my sincere wish is that he may announce to America that the National Convention of France, out of pure friendship to America, has consented to respite Louis. That people, your only ally, ask you by my vote to delay the execution. Ah, citizens, give not the tyrant of England the triumph of seeing the man perish on the scaffold who helped my much beloved America to break her chains."

No doubt under similar circumstances Paine would have made an equally fervent appeal for the life of the tyrant of England; he would have expunged the word revenge from the language of men. But above all he was very jealous for the good name of the Revolution: "My anxiety for the cause of France has become for the moment concern for her honor." Elemental forces, however, were now sweeping all before them; neither principle nor policy could check them in their course. Facing that hate-maddened throng, Paine was sensible of his danger; it was a gallant fight for a man nearing sixty, and fought



to the last ditch. European royalty had wailed and blustered; the Duke of Brunswick had outrageously threatened and insulted the French and goaded them into desperate measures; it was left to the king-hating old rebel to endanger his life and liberty in an attempt to save their weak and vacillating brother.

The King was executed on the day following his sentence, and after that the deluge. The old régime had scorned to negotiate with the adversary while yet he was in the way; they gambled on outside force to suppress the revolt, and by force they were now suppressed. A majority of seventy in a voting body of upwards of seven hundred was an unsatisfactory showing for the extremists; they speeded up their policy of frightfulness. Those who had voted for clemency were entered on the list as "royalists, traitors or fools." The slogan, "Liberty and Humanity," was particularly irritating to the party in power. Gossip carried to Paine Marat's assertion that "Frenchmen are mad to allow foreigners to live among them. They ought to cut off their ears, let them bleed a few days, and then cut off their heads." Marat now brooded on destruction; it is known that he suffered from a loathsome disease which frequently unhinges the mind. Hate and fear affect the mind similarly, and from these diseases the nation at large suffered.

Paine's circle was doomed; sooner or later his closest friends fell into that ghastly line wending toward the guillotine. The glorious Revolution, the hope of all mankind, degenerated into a carnival of brutality. Surrounded by horrors, mourning for his friends, frustrated in his dearest hope, Paine drowned his sorrow in brandy. "I alone am escaped," he lamented in biblical phrase.

"Borne down by public and private affliction," he admitted to Rickman that he drank to excess. Morris made the most of this temporary weakness in discrediting Paine at home, writing to Robert Morris: "At present I am told he is besotted from morning till night. He is so completely down that he would be punished if he were not despised." Morris appears to have been the author of the drunken atheist legend, and the readiness with which the tale was accepted, the emphasis put upon it, is evidence how little of a damaging nature could be brought against Paine's character. From all accounts the despised inebriate must have worked harder than he drank; in that perilous time he stood by to succor all who were in distress of mind, body, or estate.

Realizing the futility of getting in the path of the oncoming Juggernaut, Paine retired from the Convention. He was at this time quartered in a mansion where Madame de Pompadour had formerly preened her feathers, and ruling the king, had ruled France. "My apartments consisted of three rooms," he wrote, ". . . a flight of stairs, almost hidden by the vines that grew over it, by which I could descend into the garden without going down stairs through the house. . . . I used to find some relief by walking alone in the garden after dark, and cursing with hearty goodwill the authors of that terrible system that had turned the character of the revolution I had been proud to defend. I went but little into the Convention, and then only to make my appearance, because I found it impossible to join in their tremendous decrees, and useless and dangerous to oppose them. My having voted and spoken so extensively, more so than any other member, against the execution of the

king, had already fixed a mark upon me; neither dared any of my associates in the Convention to translate and speak in French for me anything I might have dared to have written . . . no good could be done by writing, no printer dared to print; and whatever I might have written for my private amusement . . . would have been continually exposed to be examined, and tortured into any meaning that the rage of party might fix upon it. And as to softer subjects, my heart was in distress at the fate of my friends, and my harp hung upon the weeping willows. . . .

“We spent much time in the garden . . . in those childish amusements that serve to keep reflection from the mind . . . such as marbles, Scotch hops, battledores, etc., at which we were all pretty expert. . . . Our landlord went every evening into the city to bring us the news of the day and the evening journal.”

Liberty, equality, and fraternity had gone into the basket with the head of Louis XVI. The news from England was not encouraging; radicals were fined, imprisoned, or transported for selling *The Rights of Man*; some made their escape and turned up at the little house in the Faubourg St. Denis, only to find they were out of the frying-pan into the fire. Among the English refugees was Rickman, who relates that Paine did his best to enliven that doleful period. “After breakfast he usually strayed an hour or two in the garden, where he one morning pointed out the kind of spider whose web furnished him with the first idea of constructing his iron bridge; a fine model of which, in mahogany, is preserved in Paris. The happy little circle who lived with him will ever remember those days with delight; with these select

friends he would talk of his boyish days, play at chess, whist, pique or cribbage, and enliven the moments by many interesting anecdotes. . . . His conversation was often witty and cheerful, always acute and improving, but never frivolous. Incorrupt, straightforward and sincere, he pursued his political course in France, as everywhere else, let the government or clamor or faction of the day be what it might, with firmness, with clearness, and without a shadow of turning."

While his harp was hanging on the weeping willow, it was characteristic of Paine that he wasted no energy in bewailing human idiocy, or in pluming himself on his superior wisdom. He conferred with the few moderates who retained their heads; he was unremitting in his ministrations to the bereaved families of his friends, and exerted himself endlessly to aid English and Americans, regardless of their politics. His faith in a better order of society as the ultimate outcome of the Revolution was unshaken, and is now justified by history. Still, he could not blink the fact that the immediate prospect on the French Rubicon was disheartening. America loomed large as the home of the free and the land of Common Sense. Saddened, but not cast down, he wrote Jefferson:

"Had the Revolution been conducted consistently with its principles, there was once a good prospect of extending liberty through the greatest part of Europe; but I now relinquish that hope. Should the enemy by venturing into France put themselves again in a condition of being captured, the hope will revive; but this is a risk I do not wish to see tried, lest it should fail. As the prospect of a general freedom is now much shortened, I begin to contemplate returning home. I shall await the event of

the proposed Constitution, and then take my final leave of Europe." A postscript suffices for his personal affairs; he has news of the burning of his house in New Rochelle: "I assure you I shall not bring money enough to build another."

Realizing that his life was in danger, in daily expectation of following his friends to the judgment seat, he determined to render a last service to mankind. Obviously the most perfect political formula was no panacea for the miseries of the world so long as greed and lust for power could be carried over into the new forms. He now saw that ignorance, rather than institutions, was the real enemy of man, ignorance fostered by superstition, and against this he had reserved his most powerful explosive for a last throw.



## Chapter XIV

### THE AGE OF UNREASON

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. . . . Infidelity does not consist in believing or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what [a man] does not believe. It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief . . . that mental lying has produced in society.—THOMAS PAINE.

**I**N the early days of the American Revolution, Paine had confided to John Adams a desire to air his views on accepted religious beliefs. Rash to the point of recklessness in personal matters, he was the canniest of men where his cause was concerned. Convinced that American independence was of vital importance to the world, he would not draw the red herring of religious controversy across the trail. His immediate task was to help overthrow the state and put the English government in its proper place; then something would have to be done about the church, "the machine of government," a partner in its crimes.

Distrust of priestcraft was a Quaker inheritance, not diminished by Aunt Cocke's misguided efforts for his salvation, and greatly augmented by the outbreak of primitive savagery in France. "Why," he asked, "has the Revolution in France been stained with crimes, while the [American] Revolution was not? Men are physically the same in all countries; it is education that makes them different. Accustom a people to believe that priests, or any other class of men can forgive sins, and you will have sins in abundance."

Paine, like Bernard Shaw, was continually charged with flippancy. Iconoclasts are put to it to get their heresies across to the stodgy; these men discovered the trick, which Paine explained in a letter to his fellow deist, Elihu Palmer. "The hinting and intimating manner that was formerly used on subjects of this kind, produced skepticism, but not conviction. It is necessary to be bold. Some people can be reasoned into sense, and others must be shocked into it. Say a bold thing that will stagger them and they will begin to think." Paine had never been charged with a hinting manner; acting on his theory of publicity technique, he proceeded to stagger the "Bible idolaters." The bad odor of sanctity had long troubled him.

"It is the duty of every true Deist," he claimed, "that he vindicate the moral justice of God against the calumnies of the Bible." Leaving the orthodox staggering under this bold thrust, he went on to explain his object in writing the book which has immortalized him as an atheist. "My friends were falling as fast as the guillotine could cut their heads off, and as I expected every day the same fate, I resolved to begin my work. I appeared to myself to be on my deathbed, for death was on every side of me, and I had no time to lose. This accounts for my writing at the time I did, and so nicely did the time and intention meet, that I had not finished the first part of the work more than six hours before I was arrested and taken to prison. The people of France were running headlong into atheism, and I had the work translated in their own language, to stop them in that career, and fix them in the first article of every man's creed, who has any creed at all—I *believe in God.*"

When the French Revolution, the torch which was to enlighten the world, had sputtered out into blackest darkness, Paine wrote *The Age of Reason* as his last will and testament to mankind. The first part of the book was written when he was in robust health, and without the aid of a Bible; it was meant to shock men into thinking, but compared to the second part it is a model of restraint, has a "come, let us reason together" tone. It was dedicated to "my Fellow Citizens of the United States," though he was evidently dubious of their enthusiasm for it: "You will do me the justice to remember, that I have always strenuously supported the Right of every Man to his own opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies another this right, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion. . . . The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is Reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall."

Paine's confession of faith would pass unchallenged in thousands of modern pulpits:

"I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

"I believe in the equality of man, and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy.

"I do not believe in the creed professed . . . by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church. . . . All national institutions of churches . . . appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind and monopolize power and profit.

"I do not mean . . . to condemn those who believe otherwise. They have the same right to their belief as

I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man that he be faithful to himself. . . . It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief . . . that mental lying has produced in society.

“The adulterous connection of church and state, . . . whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish—had so effectually prohibited, by pains and penalties, every discussion upon established creeds and [I saw] that until the system of government should be changed those subjects could not be brought fairly and openly before the world, but that whenever this should be done, a revolution in the system of religion would follow.

“Did the book called the Bible [Old Testament] excel in purity of ideas and expression all the books now extant in the world, I would not take it for my rule of faith as being the word of God. . . . But when I see throughout the greater part of this book scarcely anything but a history of the grossest vices, and a collection of the most paltry and contemptible tales, I cannot dishonor my Creator by calling it by his name.”

Paine never overlooks an opportunity to humble aristocratic arrogance: “It is somewhat curious that the three persons whose names are most universally recorded were of very obscure parentage. Moses was a foundling, Jesus Christ was born in a stable, and Mahomet was a mule driver. The first and last of these men were founders of different systems of religion, but Jesus Christ founded no new system. He called men to practice the moral virtues, and the belief of one God. The great trait in his character is philanthropy. . . . Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect, to the *real* character of Jesus Christ. He was a most virtuous

and amiable man. . . . He preached most excellent morality, and the equality of man, but he preached also against the corruption and avarice of the Jewish priests; and this brought upon him the hatred and vengeance of the whole order of priesthood. . . .

“[The Christian church] has set up a religion of pomp and revenue in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty.

“The religion that approaches nearest of all others to true Deism, in the moral and benign part thereof, is that professed by the Quakers; but they have contracted themselves too much by leaving the works of God out of their system. Though I reverence their philanthropy, I cannot help smiling at the conceit that if the taste of a Quaker could have been consulted at the creation, what a silent and drab creation it would have been! Not a flower would have blossomed its gaieties, nor a bird been permitted to sing. . . .

“Do we want to contemplate [God’s] power? We see it in the immensity of creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible Whole is governed? Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. . . .

“Whether we sleep or wake the vast machinery of the universe still goes on. Are these things and the blessings they indicate in the future nothing to us? Can our gross feelings be excited by no other subject than tragedy and suicide? Or is the gloomy pride of man become so in-



tolerable that nothing can flatter it but the sacrifice of the Creator?"

He summarizes his arguments: "First, Belief of a word of God existing in print, or in writing, or in speech, is inconsistent in itself for the reasons already assigned. . . .

"Secondly—The Creation we behold is the real and ever-existing word of God, in which we cannot be deceived. . . .

"Thirdly—The moral duty of man consists in imitating the moral goodness and beneficence of God. . . . Everything of persecution and revenge between man and man, and everything of cruelty to animals, is a violation of moral duty.

"I trouble not myself about the manner of future existence. I content myself with believing, even to positive conviction, that the power that gave me existence is able to continue it . . . and it appears more probable to me that I shall continue to exist hereafter than that I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began."

In conclusion: "It is certain that in one point all nations of the earth and all religions agree. All nations believe in a God. The things in which they disagree are the redundancies annexed to that belief; and, therefore, if ever a universal religion should prevail, it will not be believing anything new, but in getting rid of redundancies. . . . Adam, if ever there was such a man, was created a Deist, but in the meantime, let every man follow as he has a right to do, the religion and the worship he prefers."

Here ended the first part of *The Age of Reason*, which

set the Christian world on fire. Excepting the violent Fundamentalists, no religious person would today be inflamed by reading it. It is ludicrous to suppose that a man of Paine's intense temperament would indulge in flippancy on the brink of eternity. The ink had barely dried on his work when the long-expected happened; the guards came to arrest him at three o'clock in the morning, as the authorities wished to make as little stir about it as might be. Through all Paine's recklessness runs a thread of shrewdness; he took care that an unpublished paper, *Observations on the Commerce between the United States of America and France*, should not escape their attention, as they diligently went through his papers. The interpreters who examined *The Age of Reason* thought it "an interesting work; it will do much good." They were so impressed with all they read that they behaved "not only with civility, but with tokens of respect to my character, . . . and conducted me to the prison of the Luxembourg, . . . as they would a man whose undeserved fate they regretted." His papers, they said, showed him to be a man of good morals and good principles. On his way to prison he confided to Joel Barlow the manuscript of *The Age of Reason*.

The next chapter deals with Paine's imprisonment. Suffice it to say that after eleven months he came out, a man broken on the wheel. Human misery is an abstraction; a paralyzed body, a suppurating abscess, and a florescence of carbuncles make it tangible and visible. The cause of his misery? Man's inhumanity. The cause of man's inhumanity? "A cruel God makes a cruel man." It was high time to do away with such a God. The Monroes, who rescued him as a patriotic service to their coun-

try, evidently provided him with a Bible, to which he applied himself, and found it "much worse than I had conceived." Under the stimulus of constant pain, "with hearty good will" he eased his sufferings by demolishing that demon-God of the Jewish tribes; every wallop was an anodyne to pain. Many men would have been embittered against humankind; his rage was kindled against the idea of God which he believed was responsible for making men cruel. He slashed through the amiable Mr. Monroe's Bible from cover to cover. Finding that he had erred "by speaking better of some parts . . . than they deserved," he avoided that error in the second part of *The Age of Reason*. In his preoccupation with political evils, he had too long neglected the attack on the adversary of the race, superstition; his time seemed short, and he must make the most of it.

"There are matters in that book [the Bible] said to be done by the express command of God, that are as shocking to humanity, and to every idea of moral justice, as anything done by Robespierre, by Carrier, by Joseph le Bon in France, by the English government in the East Indies, or by any other assassin in modern times." This was hitting in all directions at once. The Israelites "came by stealth upon whole nations of people who . . . had given them no offense: *they put all those nations to the sword: they spared neither age nor infancy: they utterly destroyed men, women and children: they left not a soul to breathe.*"

"Speaking for myself, if I had no other evidence that the Bible was fabulous than the sacrifice I must make to believe it to be true, that alone would be sufficient to determine my choice."

Justice and mercy are the cardinal points of all religions; aside from being all wrong chronologically and historically, the first five books of Moses, he finds, are lacking in these fundamentals. "The character of Moses, as stated in the Bible, is the most horrid that can be imagined. If those accounts be true, he was the wretch that first began and carried on wars on the score, or on the pretense of religion . . . and under . . . that infatuation, committed the most unexampled atrocities that are to be found in the history of any nation: 'And Moses said unto them, . . . now therefore kill every male among the little ones and kill every woman that hath known a man by lying with him. But all the women and children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.'

"Among the detestable villains that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man it is impossible to find a greater than Moses if this account be true. Here is an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers, and debauch the daughters. . . .

"The evidence that I have produced, and shall produce in the course of this work, to prove that the Bible is without authority will, whilst it wounds the stubbornness of a priest, relieve and tranquillize the minds of millions: it will free them from all those hard thoughts of the Almighty which priestcraft and the Bible have infused into their minds, and which stood in everlasting opposition to all their ideas of moral justice and benevolence. . . .

"Menahan smote the city of Tiphseh (2 Kings, xv: 16) because they opened not the city to him and *all the women therein that were with child he ripped up.*'

Could we permit ourselves to suppose that the Almighty would distinguish any nation of people by the name of his *chosen people*, we must suppose that people to have been an example to all the rest of the world of the purest piety and humanity, and not such a nation of ruffians and cutthroats as the ancient Jews were."

Men in these latter times have believed all the prophets wrote, but "it does not appear that these prophets or historians believed each other; they knew each other too well."

The characters of the Bible heroines he finds unattractive: "The next book in the course is the book of Esther. If Madam Esther thought it any honor to offer herself as a kept mistress to Ahasuerus, or a rival to Queen Vashti, who had refused to come to a drunken king, in the midst of a drunken company, to be made a show of . . . let Esther and Mordecai look to that, it is no business of ours; at least, it is none of mine. . . .

"I come to the book of Ruth, an idle bungling story, foolishly told, nobody knows by whom, about a strolling country girl creeping slyly to bed to her cousin Boaz. Pretty stuff indeed to be called the word of God! It is, however, one of the best books in the Bible, for it is free from murder and rapine."

For the book of Job he can honestly say a good word, though he credits it to the heathen, and not to the Chosen People, "whose practice has been to calumniate and blacken the character of all other nations; and it is from the Jewish accounts that we have learned to call them heathens. . . .

"Agur's prayer in Proverbs . . . is the only sensible, well-conceived and well-expressed prayer in the Bible.



. . . 'Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither riches nor poverty, but feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal and take the name of my God in vain.' This has not any of the marks of being a Jewish prayer, for the Jews never prayed but when they were in trouble, and never for anything but victory, vengeance or riches."

He discounts the wisdom of Solomon, who was cut off in his prime, having "lived fast, and died, tired of the world at fifty-eight years." And no wonder: "Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines are worse than none; and however it may carry with it the appearance of heightened enjoyment, it defeats all the felicity of affection by leaving it no point to fix upon; divided love is never happy . . . and if [Solomon] could not, with all his pretensions to wisdom, discover it beforehand, he merited, unpitied, the mortification he afterwards endured. . . . Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines would have stood in the place of the whole book. It was needless after this to say that all was vanity and vexation of spirit; for it is impossible to derive happiness from the company of those whom we deprive of happiness.

"To be happy in old age it is necessary that we accustom ourselves to objects that can accompany the mind all the way through life, and that we take the rest as good in their day. The mere man of pleasure is miserable in old age; and the mere drudge of business is but little better; whereas natural philosophy, mathematical and mechanical science, are a continual source of tranquil pleasure; and in spite of the gloomy dogmas of priests, and of

superstition, the study of those things is the study of true theology; it teaches men to know and to admire the Creator, for the principles of science are in the creation, and are unchangeable and of divine origin.

"Those who knew Benjamin Franklin will recollect that his mind was ever young; his temper ever serene; science, that never grows gray, was always his mistress. He was never without an object; for when we cease to have an object, we become like an invalid in a hospital, waiting for death."

Again he warms up on the subject of the prophets; he will not allow them to be coupled with the name of Jesus, the philanthropist: "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son (Isaiah) has been interpreted to mean the person called Jesus Christ and his mother Mary: and has been echoed through Christendom for more than a thousand years: and such has been the rage of this opinion that scarcely a spot in it but has been stained with blood and marked with desolation in consequence of it. . . ."

All of the prophets were famous for lying, "some of them excelled in cursing. Elisha . . . was a chief in this branch of prophesying: it was he that cursed the forty-two children, in the name of the Lord, whom the two she-bears came and devoured. We are to suppose that these children were of the [opposite party] but as those who will curse will lie, there is just as much credit to be given to the story of Elisha's two she-bears as there is to that of the Dragon of Wantley, of whom it is said:

Poor children three devoured he,  
That could not with him grapple;  
And at one sup he ate them up,  
As a man would eat an apple.

"When a priest quotes any [Bible] passage, he unriddles it agreeably to his own views. The 'whore of Babylon' has been the common whore of all priests, and each has accused the other of keeping her; so well do they agree in their explanations. . . .

"I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees. Here they lie, and the priests if they can, may re-plant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow."

Coming to the New Testament, he calms down; the Founder of Christianity, moral, benevolent, and a whole-hearted rebel, he has no quarrel with, and he suspects the Roman government of working hand in glove with the Hebrew hierarchy: "The accusation which those priests brought against him was that of sedition and . . . it is not improbable that the Roman government might have some secret apprehension of the effect of his doctrine, as well as the Jewish priests. . . . Between the two, however, this virtuous reformer and religionist lost his life."

The miraculous birth was a different story: if an angel revealed it to Joseph and Mary, it was a revelation to them, and they were at liberty to believe it. Others who had it only on the hearsay of hearsay could take it or leave it. Moreover:

"Obscenity in matters of faith, however wrapped up, is always a token of fable and imposture; for it is necessary to our serious belief in God that we do not connect it with stories that run, as this does, into ludicrous interpretations. This story is upon the face of it, the same kind of story as that of Jupiter and Leda . . . or any of the amorous adventures of Jupiter. . . . [Matthew]

says the angel appeared to Joseph; [Luke] says it was to Mary; but either Joseph or Mary was the worst evidence that could have been thought of; for it was others that should have testified for them, and not they for themselves."

Paine cast a more than dubious eye on revelation; those who believed in private verbal messages from the Almighty to mankind had shown a dangerous disposition to deliver them at the point of the bayonet, or through the medium of the civil law. Revelation "so far as the term has relation between God and man, can only be applied to something which God reveals of his *will* to man; but although the power of the Almighty to make such a communication is necessarily admitted, because to that power all things are possible, yet the thing so revealed . . . is revelation to the person *only to whom it is made*. . . .

"But though, speaking for myself, I thus admit the possibility of revelation, I totally disbelieve that the Almighty ever did communicate anything to man by any mode of speech, in any language or by any kind of vision or appearance, or by any means which our senses are capable of receiving, otherwise than by the universal display of himself in the works of creation. . . .

"The most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, and the greatest miseries that have afflicted the human race, have had their origin in this thing called . . . revealed religion. It has been the most dishonorable belief against the character of the divinity, the most destructive to the morality and the peace and happiness of man, that was ever propagated since man began to exist. It is better, far better, that we admitted . . . a



thousand devils to roam at large, and to preach publicly the doctrine of devils, if there were any such, than that we permitted one such impostor and monster as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and the Bible prophets, to come with the pretended word of God in his mouth, and have credit amongst us.

“Whence arose all the horrid assassinations of whole nations of men, women and infants, with which the Bible is filled, and the bloody persecutions, and tortures unto death, and religious wars, that since that time have laid Europe in blood and ashes; whence arose they but from this impious thing called revealed religion, and this monstrous belief that God has spoken to man? . . . The only sect that has not persecuted are the Quakers; . . . and they called the scriptures a dead letter. Had they called them by a worse name they had been nearer the truth. . . .

“The philosopher knows that the laws of the Creator have never changed with respect either to the principles of science or to the properties of matter. Why, then, is it to be supposed that they have changed with respect to man? . . . I leave the ideas that are suggested in the conclusion of this work to rest on the mind of the reader: certain, as I am, that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.”

His mind now relieved from the thrall of a desire long suppressed, his very serious physical condition began to show signs of improvement. With the prospect of a good time coming when the church, like the state, should pick up the gauntlet he had thrown down, he was loath to quit the human scene.



## Chapter XV

### A T A N G L E D N A T I O N A L I T Y

Listen to the reproach of fools; it is a kingly title.—WILLIAM BLAKE.

"FRANCE has a strong ally," wrote Gouverneur Morris, "in the feelings of those nations who are subject to despotism, but for that reason she has a mortal enemy in every prince." Paine had already written in almost identical words; it was one of the few points on which these gentlemen agreed, Morris favoring the princes, and Paine the subjects of despotism. Paine lost no sleep over the mortal enmity of princes; it was the unseemly brawls between the subjects of despotism which caused him anxiety. Some one, Macaulay perhaps, remarked that no battle was ever won by a debating society. With the powers of the world drawn up in battle against them, the French Revolutionists broke up into debating societies; they debated themselves into violent hatred.

Madame Roland made the sorrowful discovery that "the French do not know how to deliberate. They do not know how to listen. . . . Their attention is easily fatigued. . . . It is not possible to do good in politics save by uniting efforts, and there is nothing so difficult as to unite different minds to work persistently to the same end. Everybody believes in the efficacy of his own system. He is irritated and bored by that of another, and because

he does not know how to bend to an idea a little different from his own he ends by going alone. For more than a century philosophy has been preaching tolerance; it has begun to root itself in some minds; but I see little of it in our customs. Our fine minds laugh at patience as a negative virtue. I confess that in my eyes it is the true force of the soul, the fruit of profound reflection, the necessary means for conciliating men and spreading instruction, in short, the virtue of a free people."

La Fayette endeavored to inculcate in his countrymen that virtue in which he had been trained by a leader who fell to the lot of the Americans more by good luck than good management. It is written in the chronicles of the American Revolution that an omniscient Congress planned a military sortie into Canada, without taking the commander-in-chief of the army into their confidence. General Gates was to be entrusted with the enterprise, and to alienate the affections of the young Frenchman from his chief, La Fayette was offered a command. Resenting the affront to his revered chief, the youngster—he was then only twenty—turned the letter over to Washington, indignantly determined to decline. Ignoring the gross affront to himself, Washington, who had proved the efficiency and courage of his youthful aide, urged him, for the good of the cause, to accept. To this superpersonal altitude the French leaders could not climb when France was in dire need of disinterested leadership. America rose against external domination, France against internal corruption, a much more difficult undertaking.

As the Revolution began to run wild, Paine expostulated with the men in power. "I am exceedingly dis-

turbed," he informed Citizen Danton, "at the distractions, jealousies, discontents and uneasiness that reign among us, and which, if they continue, will bring ruin and disgrace on the Revolution. . . . I now despair of seeing the great object of European liberty accomplished, and my despair arises not from the combined foreign powers, not from the intrigues of the aristocracy and priestcraft, but from the tumultuous conduct with which the internal affairs of the present Revolution is conducted. . . . I am distressed to see matters so badly conducted, and so little attention to moral principles."

On the vigorous spirit of Citizen Danton moral principles lay lightly. Revolutions, he declared, were not made with rose water; the "authority should belong to the greatest scoundrels." These proved as ruthless in making an end of their friend as of their enemies. The American Minister Morris, by his own admission, quite approved of Terrorist methods; it was only their principles he detested. Democracy, he held, is not government, but "dissolution of government . . . so that, in reality, there are but two forms, monarchy and aristocracy. . . . It has been triumphantly asked, as if unanswerable, 'Would you make war on principles?' To this I have frequently had occasion to reply: Yes, and to destroy principles inconsistent with the peace and happiness of mankind, DESTROY THOSE WHO HOLD THEM." A coalition of the Terrorists and the Ambassador came near to destroying Paine, of whose principles Morris disapproved, and who, having no more sense of concealment than an alarm clock, shouted them from the housetop. Though he never fathomed the depth of Morris' intrigue against him, he came to the conclusion later on "that the





RICHARD CARLILE

This young man was the cause of much activity in the Society for the Suppression of Vice and other patriotic organizations of his day. His mission in life was to circulate Paine's works. In the belief that he had mistaken his calling the English Government kept him in jail for nine years. The females of his species put their shoulders to the wheel and the fight for a free press was won.



leaders of the Reign of Terror in America and the leaders of the Reign of Terror in France, during the time of Robespierre were in character the same sort of men, or how is it to be accounted for that I was persecuted by both at the same time."

Paine's life is so woven into the historical pattern of the times that it is necessary to pause occasionally and take in the whole picture. America started the universal political upheaval which turned the topsy-turvy western world into armed camps. The French Revolution was as bitterly fought over in America as in France. Generally speaking, the aristocratic and commercial classes sided with the English, the democrats with the French; "United" States was a sardonic misnomer. The whole responsibility for steadying as rickety a government as ever fell to the hand of man to control was put up to Washington. He had brought them through the war; unless the Revolution was to be a total loss, he must bring them through the peace. "It is the fixed opinion of the world," Edmund Randolph grimly reminded him, "that you surrender nothing incomplete. How much easier will it be to disperse the factions which are rushing to the catastrophe, than to subdue them after they appear in arms."

America was cast for the part of weaker nation by the Europeans, who were eager to see her made weaker by disruption. Whichever way his sympathies may have leaned, it was the fixed opinion of Washington that at any cost he must get rid of the English. By treaty they agreed to evacuate the fur trading-posts, but insisted on holding them till the uttermost farthing of American

debt should be paid; the European attitude toward debt has changed since Washington's time.

From these points of vantage English officers incited the Indians to atrocities, so said Washington, which in turn incited the frontiersmen to rage against their government, no doubt an object of diplomacy, and bid fair to end the union, which was already staggering dizzily. A commercial treaty with England seemed to offer the only alternative to war, and the President would rather eat humble pie than take that dubious risk. With a stable government, America had all eternity to work out a democracy; it was now or never for union. The situation culminated in the Jay treaty, which almost broke up the union; a miracle in the history of the world, these *United States of America*.

There was no preferential treatment in Virginia for her illustrious son. It was John Randolph who proposed the toast: "General Washington, may he be damned," but observing that the toast was too raw for the company, he hastily added, "If he signs the Jay treaty." South Carolina voiced the threat that if the treaty entered into by "that damned arch traitor John Jay with the British tyrant should be ratified, one hundred thousand free and independent Virginians would secede from the Union." Hard put to it, the Federalists begged old Patrick Henry to give them a hand. The veteran orator suspected them of "an awful squint toward monarchy," but came to their aid for the common good. Training his oratorical guns on the bumptious Virginians, he advised them that if they started an insurrection, General Washington would lead an army to put them down. "Where is the citizen of America," he demanded in his old "liberty or death"

style, "who will dare to lift his hand against the father of his country? No! you dare not do it! In such a parricide attempt the steel would drop from your nerveless arms."

Pennsylvania, over whose frontiers, instigated by the English, the Indians were rampaging uncabined and unconfined, was so weary of the delay in declaring war on England that she breathed sighs for a revolution and a busy little guillotine. Mr. Blair tossed the Jay treaty to a Philadelphia mob, recommending that they "kick it to hell." Alexander Hamilton was pelted in the streets, and John Adams, unduly terrified, turned his dwelling into an arsenal. The country was illuminated with the bonfires which cremated the effigy of John Jay. Such was the tranquil spirit and orderly conduct of the forefathers we are constantly urged to emulate.

Whether Washington could have pulled out of a perilous position by any other means than the hated treaty is no part of this story. On the other hand, it is not difficult to understand the bigotry of the republicans, so recently converted from monarchy, and baptized by fire and sword. In view, however, of this intensely bigoted republicanism, the genuflections of American ambassadors seem to have been somewhat overdone. John Jay may have made the best possible treaty in the circumstances, or he may have been too easily imposed on by English bluff. He certainly might have made his curtsy to the Crown without touching his head to the floor. It was not soothing to the bedeviled Pennsylvanians to read his statement that "the United States has no other resource than the justice and magnanimity of his Majesty."

It is somewhat startling to read in Seward's *Life of John Quincy Adams* a dialogue between his father, John Adams, and George III., who had set a price on his head, not so long before :

"I think myself more fortunate than all my fellow citizens, in having the distinguished honor to be the first to stand in your Majesty's royal presence, in a diplomatic character; and I shall esteem myself the happiest of men, if I can be instrumental in recommending my country more and more, to your Majesty's benevolence, and in restoring an entire esteem, confidence and affection . . . between people, who, though separated by an ocean, . . . have the same language, a similar religion, and kindred blood. I beg your Majesty's permission to add, that although I have sometimes before been intrusted by my country, it was never in my whole life in a manner so agreeable to myself."

George III. did not overrate the value of blood, language, and religion. He was more interested in the language of the balance sheet: "The language you have now held is so extremely proper, and the feelings you have discovered so justly adapted to the occasion, that . . . I not only receive with pleasure the assurances of the friendly disposition of the People of the United States, but I am very glad the choice has fallen upon you to be their Minister. . . . I will be frank with you—I was the last to conform to the separation, but I have always said . . . that I would be the first to meet the friendship of the United States, as an independent power. The moment I see such sentiments and language as yours prevail, *and a disposition to give this country the preference*, I shall say, Let the circumstances of language,



religion and blood have their natural and full effect." His Majesty, as he admitted, was frank, and Adams' cross-eyed squint toward monarchy was enough to make the republicans nervous. It was a speech to make Samuel Adams squirm, and it is questionable whether all this humility was good diplomacy. In spite of blood, language, and religion, the two countries were soon involved in war.

To the pro-English party, Morris gave his political allegiance; his brother was an officer in King George's army, and married to a lady of rank. Socially, however, Morris found the English too cold and "pure"; the gay life of Paris was better suited to his taste. Morris schemed for the French monarchy as against the Revolutionists, and for the abrogation of the French treaty which blocked the way to the commercial treaty with England. England and France were now at war, and American commerce lay between the hammer and the anvil. American vessels bound for France were dragged into English ports, and, not to be outdone by her rival, France outwitted the enemy by holding at Bordeaux ninety-two vessels, a respectable portion of the American merchant marine. The wails of the American captains rent the air; they called on Minister Morris to demand their release. The more bitterness against France, the better the outlook for abrogating the treaty; Minister Morris told the irate captains they had got themselves into the lion's mouth; let them get out of it the best way they knew how.

Breathing vengeance, the captains sought out Paine, bent on exposing the minister's bad conduct to the world. A bad idea, Paine persuaded them, a humiliation for



America in the eyes of the world; leave the matter to him. In any case, Paine would have bestirred himself to help his countrymen, now there was the added incentive of avoiding friction between France and America. When one hope sank, he usually had another to float; the prospect of liberating Europe had grown remote, but he still believed that France would return to sanity and liberate herself, in which case the two republics might exert a pressure on the despots of the world.

The captains were soon in possession of their ships, thanks to Paine, who then called on Morris to relieve his indignation; did he not "feel ashamed to take the money of the country and do nothing for it"? It was not the language prescribed either by etiquette or prudence, for addressing a man of birth and position, by one whom he considered his inferior. Angered by the affront to his pride and the confusion to his politics, Morris interpreted the interference as "an ambition so contemptible that I shall draw a veil over it." This, to Paine's friend Jefferson; to Robert Morris he lifted the veil: "I suspected that Paine was intriguing against me, although he put on a face of attachment. Since that period I am confirmed in the idea, for he came to my house with Colonel Oswald, and being a little more drunk than usual, behaved extremely ill, and through his insolence I discovered clearly his vain ambition." The language of Paine may have seemed to Morris insolent; it was certainly not that of an intriguer.

Joel Barlow, a mutual acquaintance of these antagonistic gentlemen, puts a more favorable construction on Paine's activity: "He was always charitable to the poor beyond his means, a sure friend and protector of all

Americans in distress that he found in foreign countries; and he had frequent occasion to exert his influence in protecting them during the Revolution in France." He was, in fact, exerting his influence to avert the consequences of Morris' very great indiscretion, at the time that gentleman was using the poison pen against him.

It was well known to the revolutionists that Morris was intriguing against the country to which he was an accredited minister. Further, his pomposity in referring to instructions from Philadelphia as the "orders of my court" irritated them. The part Morris played in the chicaneries of European diplomacy might easily have embroiled his country and proved dangerous to himself; the evidence was in the hands of the Committee of Safety. Paine warned Barrère, author of the fine resounding phrase, "Let us make terror the order of the day," to go slow if he wished to keep his good friends in America.

"Mr. Jefferson, Minister of Foreign Affairs," wrote Paine, "is an ardent defender of the interests of France. Gouverneur Morris, who is here now, is badly disposed towards you. I believe he has expressed the wish to be recalled. The reports which he will make on his arrival will not be advantageous to France. This event necessitates the sending of direct commissioners. . . . Morris is not popular in America. He has set the Americans who are here against him, as also the captains of that nation who have come from Bordeaux, by his negligence with regard to [their] affair. . . . He told them: 'that they had thrown themselves into the lion's mouth, and it was for them to get out of it as best they could.' I shall return

to America on one of the vessels which will start from Bordeaux in the month of October. . . .

“Morris has many relations in America, who are excellent patriots. I inclose you a letter which I received from his brother, General Louis Morris, who was a member of the Congress at the time of the Declaration of Independence. You will see by it that he writes like a good patriot. I only mention this so that you may know the true state of things. It will be fit to have respect to Gouverneur Morris on account of his relations. . . .

“If events force the American captains to demand a convoy, it will be to me they will write on the subject, and not to Morris, against whom they have grave reasons of complaint.” It is a crafty letter; Morris, in spite of his plots, was entitled to vicarious respect; any injury to him would alienate influential friends of their cause on the other side.

Meanwhile, with the powers of despotism pressing them on every side, the Revolutionists were bent on decapitating their movement; moderation had become a capital crime. “Ah, France!” Paine wrote despondently to Lady Smith, “thou hast ruined the character of a revolution virtuously begun, and destroyed those who produced it.” Of his intimate circle he was the sole survivor. Behind closed doors his group had been denounced, Brissot for anti-slavery agitation and for clemency toward the King. “At the same time,” so ran the accusation, “the Englishman Thomas Paine, called by [the Brissot] faction to the honor of representing the French nation, dishonored himself by supporting the opinions of Brissot, and by promising us in his fable the dissatisfaction of the United States of America, our

natural allies, which he did not blush to depict for us as full of veneration and gratitude for the tyrant of France."

Paine had announced his intention to return to America; a diplomatic wink from Morris to his Terrorist accomplices, and the sailing date was indefinitely postponed. Morris writes that he told them: "I had observed an overruling influence in their affairs, *which seemed to come from across the channel*, and at the same time had traced the intention to excite a seditious spirit in America; that it was impossible to be on a friendly footing with such persons, but that at present *a different spirit seemed to prevail*, etc. This declaration produced the effect I intended." The Senate missed a treat by Washington's refusal to show Morris' confidential letters!

Up to this time the extremists had retained enough sanity to keep their hands off the popular American citizen, Paine. Morris gave them a new idea; Paine was an Englishman. The effect he intended was produced speedily, as shown by an illuminating entry in Robespierre's notebook: "Demand that a writ accusing Thomas Paine be issued *in the interest of America* as well as of France."

An entry in the journal of an English secret service man confirms the suspicion that Morris turned thumbs down in Paine's case: "He is said to be moving heaven and earth to get himself recognized as an *American Citizen* and thereon liberated. . . . The Minister of the American States is too shrewd to allow such a fish to go over and swim in his waters if he can prevent it, and avows to Robespierre that he knows nothing of any rights of naturalization claimed by Paine."



Such an avowal, if made, was palpably dishonest. "I am imprisoned," maintained Paine, "because say they, I was born in England. I am not a subject of the British government any more than any other American is who was born, as they all were, under the same government. . . . I have twice taken the oath of abjuration to the British king and government, and of allegiance to America. Once as a citizen of Pennsylvania in 1776; and again before Congress, administered to me by the President, Mr. Hancock, when I was appointed secretary in the office of foreign affairs in 1777." Morris had voted against Paine in the Deane affair on the ground that he had broken that oath. John Dickinson officially stated that Paine was the first man to propose the oath of abjuration and allegiance as a test of loyalty, and the first to take it. Alexander Hamilton, Robert Morris, and many other distinguished patriots were foreign-born, while a number of Americans had French citizenship conferred on them, all of which Morris well knew.

The wild men of the Convention needed only the nod from the American Minister to get into action. Realizing that trouble was afoot, Paine buckled down to the work on *The Age of Reason*, which he finished during the Christmas holidays of 1793. He had barely completed it when the republican guards appeared to arrest him. With compliments on both sides they conducted him to the Luxembourg. Naturally Paine made an outcry. The correspondence on the subject between the American Ambassador and the French Minister Deforgues has all the stigmata of studied duplicity. Morris wrote:

"Thomas Paine has just applied to me to claim him as a Citizen of the United States. These (I believe) are the



facts which relate to him. He was born in England. Having become a citizen of the United States, he acquired great celebrity there through his revolutionary writings. In consequence he was adopted as French Citizen, and then elected Member of the Convention. His behavior since that epoch is out of my jurisdiction. I am ignorant of the reason for his present detention in the Luxembourg prison, but I beg you, sir, if there be reasons which prevent his liberation, and which are unknown to me, be so good as to inform me of them, so that I may communicate them to the Government of the United States."

Neither that government nor Paine ever got a glimpse of this letter, which Morris' biographer, Jared Sparks, considered tepid: "The application it must be confessed was neither pressing in its terms, nor cogent in its argument." Deforgues responded: "In your letter of the 26th, you reclaim the liberty of Thomas Paine as an American Citizen," which Mr. Morris certainly had not done. Deforgues insists that he is a French Citizen, and adds: "I am ignorant of the motives for his detention, but I must presume they are well founded." Paine and the American government received copies of this letter, which conveyed the impression that Morris had done all that could be done. These two diplomats, if they had been concerned for the man's life, might have put in their time more profitably than in protesting to each other their ignorance of Paine's offense. The first man they met in the street could have told them what it was their business to know. Morris got into action in quite a different spirit when the French nobility were in trouble. Deforgues' reply, which Morris was careful to send him, raised Paine's temperature considerably: "I received your letter

enclosing a copy of a letter from the Minister of foreign affairs. You must not leave me in the situation in which this letter places me. You know I do not deserve it, and you see the unpleasant situation in which I am thrown. I have made an essay to answer the Minister's letter, which I wish you to make ground for a reply to him. They have nothing against me—except that they do not choose I should be in a state of freedom to write my mind freely upon things I have seen. Though you and I are not on terms of the best harmony, I apply to you as the Minister of America, and you may add to that service whatever you think my integrity deserves. At any rate I expect you to make Congress acquainted with my situation, and to send them copies of the letters that have passed on the subject. A reply to the Minister's letter is absolutely necessary, were it only to *continue* the reclamation. Otherwise your silence will be a sort of consent to his observations." Paine had not then discovered that Morris and the Terrorists agreed in principles, though differing as to the objects of their application; yet, unsuspecting as he was of Morris' code, he felt the chill in his interest. The reclamation was not continued.

Meanwhile the Yankee Machiavelli was throwing a smoke screen to prevent government action; he never mentioned Paine without animus; in an official communication he casually recalls his predicament: "Lest I forget, I must mention that Thomas Paine is in prison, where he amuses himself with publishing a pamphlet against Jesus Christ. . . . He would have been executed along with the rest of the Brissotins if the advance party had not viewed him with contempt. I am inclined to think that if he is quiet in prison he may have the good

luck to be forgotten, whereas, should he be brought much into notice, the long suspended axe might fall on him. I believe he thinks I ought to claim him as an American Citizen; . . . I am sure that the claim would be, for the present at least, inexpedient and ineffectual."

The Americans in Paris had made it their business to sift the whole matter; with the guillotine steadily clicking, they were not keen for Morris' watchful waiting policy. Over the head of their Ambassador they petitioned the Citizen Legislators; the signers were citizens of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia; their protest was vigorous:

"The French nation has, by universal decree invited to France one of our countrymen, most worthy of honor, namely Thomas Paine, one of the political founders of the independence of America. Our experience of twenty years has taught America to know and esteem his public virtues and the invaluable services he rendered her.

"Persuaded that his character of foreigner and ex-Deputy is the only cause of his political imprisonment, we come in the name of our country (and we feel sure she will be grateful to us for it) . . . to reclaim our friend, our countryman. . . . If it were necessary to say more . . . to obtain the liberation of one of the most earnest and faithful apostles of liberty, we would beseech the National Convention . . . not to give a cause of joy and triumph to the allied tyrants of Europe, and above all to the despotism of Great Britain, which did not blush to outlaw this courageous and virtuous defender of liberty. . . .

"We have the intimate persuasion that you will not keep longer in the bonds of a painful captivity the man

whose courageous and energetic pen did so much to free the Americans, and whose intentions we have no doubt whatever, were to render the same service to the French Republic. . . . We hold the more firmly to our opinion of his innocence, inasmuch as we are informed that after a scrupulous examination of his papers, made by order of the Committee of General Surety, instead of anything to his charge, enough has been found rather to corroborate the purity of his principles in politics and morals. As a countryman of ours, as a man above all so dear to the Americans, we ask you . . . to give back Thomas Paine to his brethren and permit us to take him to his country which is also ours. If you require it, Citizen Representatives, we shall make ourselves warrant and security for his conduct in France during the short stay he may make in this land."

The wildest yellowback melodrama falls short of the fantastic absurdity of history. The French knew that Morris was brother to an English general; they had proof that he plotted against them. They knew that Paine had been convicted of high treason against England; the American residents of Paris asserted unequivocally his American citizenship, and assumed responsibility for taking him out of the country. In full view of all the facts, they scratched their heads and evolved an amazing reply to the petitioners. England is the scourge of the world; Thomas Paine was born there; ergo, Thomas Paine should suffer for it. In a burst of florid irrelevance, they wrote:

"It is for France, it is for the United States, to combat and lay low, in concert, these proud islanders, these insolent dominators of the sea and the commerce of na-



tions. When the sceptre of despotism is falling from the hands of the criminal tyrants of the earth, it is necessary also to break the trident which emboldens the insolence of these corsairs of Albion, these modern Carthaginians. It is time to repress the audacity and mercantile avarice of these pirates of the sea. . . . Thomas Paine is a native of England; this is undoubtedly enough to apply to him the measures of security prescribed by the revolutionary laws. It may be added, citizens, that if Thomas Paine has been the apostle of liberty, his genius has not understood that which regenerated France." Nobody, Paine least of all, would now dispute that last point with the Citizen Legislators.

Morris' cynical sense of humor must have been tickled by French logic. He was annoyed by the interference of the petitioners, and promptly sent the State Department the Deforgues letter, which implied that he had reclaimed Paine as an American: "Major Jackson . . . stepped forward to get Mr. Paine out of jail . . . has presented a petition to that effect, which was referred to . . . the Comité du Salut Public. This last, *I understand* slighted the application as totally irregular; . . . Mr. Paine wrote me a note desiring I would claim him as an American, *which I accordingly did*, though contrary to my judgment. . . . The Minister's letter to me of the 1st Ventose, of which I inclose a copy, contains the answer to *my reclamation*. I sent a copy to Mr. Paine who prepared a long answer, and sent it to me by an Englishman, whom I did not know. I told him, as Mr. Paine's friend, that my present opinion was similar to that of the Minister, but I might, perhaps, see occasion to change it, and in that case, *if Mr. Paine wished it*, I would go



on with the claim, but that it would be well for him to consider the result; that if the Government meant to release him, they had already a sufficient ground; but if not, I could only push them to bring on his trial for the *crimes* imputed to him; seeing that whether he be considered a Frenchman or an American, he must be amenable to the tribunals of France for his conduct while he was a Frenchman, and he may see in the fate of the Brisotins, that to which *he is exposed*. . . .

"It is not impossible that he may force on a decision, which, as far as I can judge, would be fatal to him; for in the best of times he has a larger share of every other sense than common sense, and lately the intemperate use of ardent spirits has, *I am told*, considerably impaired the small stock he originally possessed." This letter says more for Morris' craft than for his honor; by his own admission Paine was in danger of the guillotine, yet he hoodwinked the American government into silence, which, as Paine justly said, "was explanation enough to Robespierre that he might proceed to extremes." Morris is "told," and he "understands," but alone of all the Americans in Paris, he remains in a state of innocence regarding the *crimes* imputed to a man with whom he had personal acquaintance.

In connection with all the foregoing, there is a curious coincidence in an anonymous letter from a *Gentleman in Switzerland*, which appeared in Porcupine's vituperative pro-English sheet published in America. In it occur the identical phrases used by Morris, notably: "Paine is in prison, where he amuses himself by publishing a pamphlet against Jesus Christ." Whether or not the American Minister deliberately connived at Paine's death is

*Part 3 of Tracts to a Constitutional Reform of Parliament*



WILLIAM COBBETT. ESQ.

*1 The life and Publications by Adam Black 7 Boston St. Mass. 18 2*

The bristling "Peter Porcupine" reversed the usual order; the petted pamphleteer of the Conservatives, he turned radical in his later years. From the scurrilous detractor of Paine he became his eulogist. Whatever Cobbett did, he did with all his might.



for the reader to judge; there is, however, no question that the wreck of Paine's reputation lies principally at Morris' door. From Cheetham to Jared Sparks, and from Sparks to Roosevelt, the filthy, drunken atheist legend is traceable to Morris. It was not until his release that Paine's suspicion of the Minister was aroused, and then only vaguely: "However discordant the late American Minister Gouverneur Morris, and the late French Committee of Public Safety, were, it suited the purpose of both that I should be continued in arrestation. The former wished to prevent my return to America, that I should not expose his misconduct; and the latter lest I should publish to the world the history of its wickedness. Whilst that Minister and that Committee continued, I had no expectation of liberty. I speak here of the Committee of which Robespierre was a member."

Meanwhile, in a cold damp cell on the ground floor of the Luxembourg the American patriot Thomas Paine was kept in durance vile. During the hard winter months his room was unheated; the meager fare was bad; the horrors were such as only an inwardly centered man could have survived. Steadily the slaughter went on, dog ravenously devouring dog. "One hundred and sixty-eight persons were taken out of the Luxembourg in one night," Paine records, "and a hundred and sixty of them guillotined the next day, of which I knew I was to be one; and the manner in which I escaped that fate is curious and has all the appearance of an accident. . . . The door (of the room in which I lodged) opened outward and flat against the wall. . . . When persons by scores and hundreds were to be taken out of the prison for the guillotine it was always done in the night, and those who performed

that office had a private mark . . . by which they knew what rooms to go to. . . . We . . . were four, and the door of our room was marked, unobserved by us, with that number in chalk; but it happened, if happening is the proper word, that the mark was put on when the door was open . . . and thereby came on the inside when we were shut in at night; and the destroying angel passed by it."

Further, "The state of things in that prison was a continued state of horror. No man could count upon his life for twenty-four hours. To such a pitch of rage and suspicion were Robespierre and his Committee arrived, that it seemed as if they feared to leave a man to live."

Paine was popular with his fellow prisoners, and there is a suspicion that the incident of the chalk mark was not an accident. One of his jailers was put under arrest for leniency. Bond, an English surgeon, told that when they were locked in at night he never expected to find Paine alive in the morning; that he always expressed his firm belief in *The Age of Reason*, and begged Mr. Bond to tell the world that "such were his dying sentiments." "The most conscientious man I ever knew," was the physician's pronouncement.

For weary months not a word penetrated from the outside; Paine was held incommunicado, except for the American Minister. Cold, hunger, and mental torture brought on a fever which just missed ending his life, and probably saved it. For a month or more it left "a blank in my remembrance of life."

Then the knife fell on the head of Citizen Robespierre; the thirst for blood was satiated; the people wearied with horrors. Achille Audibert, who had escorted Deputy



Paine in triumph to Calais, took heart of courage and reminded the Committee of Public Safety of the whereabouts of his friend Paine. With intent, perhaps, to flatter and conciliate that august body which had just cut Citizen Robespierre off from further participation in mundane affairs and sent him to meet the Deity whose existence he had decreed, Audibert saddled all the odium on the departed:

"A friend of mankind is groaning in chains,—Thomas Paine, who was not so politic as to remain silent in regard to a man unlike himself, but dared to say that Robespierre was a monster. . . . Please to take my prayer into consideration. But for Robespierre's villainy this man would now be free. Do not permit liberty longer to see in prison a victim of the wretch who lives no more by his crimes." Others wrote to the same purport, and Paine himself addressed a long letter to the Committee. During the incumbency of Minister Morris nothing happened.

Meantime Paine was lost to the world in a fever. When he returned to consciousness he was greeted with good news; Minister Morris had retired with dignity, and James Monroe had come to Paris as American Minister. Paine at once renewed his efforts; in a long letter to Monroe he made his situation known. A friendly prison lamplighter smuggled the letter to the new Minister. "As soon as I was able to write a note legible enough to be read," says Paine, "I found a way to convey one to him [Monroe] by means of the man who lighted the lamps in the prison, and whose unabated friendship to me, from whom he had never received any service, and with difficulty accepted any recompense, puts the character of Mr. Washington to shame."

The letter to Monroe pleads for an acknowledgment of his American citizenship: "America never saw me flinch from her cause in the most gloomy and perilous of her situations; and I know there are those in that Country who will not flinch from me. If I have Enemies, (and every man has some) I leave them to the enjoyment of their ingratitude. . . .

"Painful as the want of liberty may be, it is a consolation to me to believe that my imprisonment proves to the world that I had no share in the murderous system that reigned. That I was an enemy to it both morally and politically, is known to all who had any knowledge of me, and could I have written French as well as I can English, I would have publicly exposed its wickedness, and shown the ruin with which it was pregnant."

Minister Monroe was completely at sea about the whole matter, but he struck out boldly. Within forty-eight hours after he had made a demand on the French government, Paine was a free man.

## Chapter XVI

### IN THE NAME OF AMERICA

Do you know what is harder to bear than the reverses of fortune? It is the baseness, the hideous ingratitude of man.—  
NAPOLEON.

THE mild-mannered Virginian who arrived in Paris to relieve Mr. Morris of his ambassadorial duties was a very much puzzled gentleman. He was received with scant courtesy by his predecessor, who failed to observe the formalities required by official etiquette. Morris disliked Virginians as such, and more especially as democrats; Monroe was on the distinguished list of his animosities. The authorities had evidence that the retiring Minister was involved in intrigue with the enemies of the French Republic. As there was no telling what those temperamental politicians might do, Moncure Conway surmises that Morris might have found life less amusing, deprived of his ministerial immunities, and therefore delayed the recognition of his successor. At any rate, Mr. Monroe grew impatient of marking time, and himself carried his credentials to the Convention.

Paine's situation was mystifying; his citizenship was no more to be questioned than Alexander Hamilton's; yet Monroe had received from the government not a word of instruction regarding him. The letter smuggled from the Luxembourg by the kindly lamplighter was his first inkling of Paine's predicament. He replied at once, urg-

ing patience; "here upon a difficult theatre" there was much to attend to; his position was delicate, but "to liberate you will be the object of my endeavors as soon as possible."

Paine had a childlike vanity about the part he had played in the American Revolution, as many great men had. Jefferson wrote his own epitaph; he wished to be known to posterity as the author of the Declaration of Independence. Even in old age it made John Adams peevish to remember that he had relinquished that honor to his rival. To the wounds of the Luxembourg prisoner, rubbed raw by a humiliating sense of neglect, Monroe applied a soothing and healing lotion. "It is unnecessary for me to tell you," he wrote Paine, "how much your countrymen, I speak of the great mass of the people, are interested in your welfare. . . . The crime of ingratitude has not yet stained, and I trust never will stain our national character. You are considered by them as not only having rendered important service in our revolution, but as being on a more extensive scale, the friend of human rights, and a distinguished and able advocate in favor of public liberty. To the welfare of Thomas Paine the Americans are not and cannot be indifferent. Of the sense which the President has always entertained of your merits, and of his friendly disposition towards you, you are too well assured to require any declaration from me. That I forward his wishes in seeking your safety is what I well know. . . . With great esteem and respect consider me personally your friend." It was official recognition as well as personal friendship; the first ray of hope which had penetrated the prison darkness for nearly a year.

Monroe's vigorous demand on the French authorities is a comment on Morris' perfunctory notes: "The citizens of the United States cannot look back upon the time of their own revolution without recollecting among the names of their most distinguished patriots that of Thomas Paine; the services he rendered to his country in its struggle for freedom have implanted in the hearts of his countrymen a sense of gratitude never to be effaced as long as they shall deserve the title of a just and generous people.

"The above-named citizen is at this moment languishing in prison, affected with a disease growing more intense from his confinement. I beg, therefore, to call your attention to his condition and to request you to hasten the moment when the law shall decide his fate, in case there is any accusation against him, and if none, restore him to liberty." Morris' innuendo had quickly produced "the effect intended"; the Committee were equally prompt in getting the sense of Mr. Monroe's letter. "The Committee of General Safety orders that Citizen Paine be set at liberty, and the seals taken from his papers." His papers had never been sealed; in appreciation of his good moral principles the respectful guards had locked his apartment and handed him the key.

Monroe and his gracious lady carried Paine to their own home, where for a year and a half he was treated with the greatest tact and kindness. To a friend in Virginia, his host wrote: "I shall certainly pay the utmost attention to this gentleman, as he is one of those whose merits in our Revolution were most distinguished." This act of personal benevolence Monroe represented as the tribute of the United States to one of her distinguished



founders. Later on, the government in some measure adopted this view and reimbursed the Minister.

Paine never completely regained his freedom, though he was out of prison. He was subject to paralytic seizures, his memory was faulty, his face disfigured by carbuncles, and he was troubled with a suppurating abscess; all mementos of his eleven months' sojourn in the Luxembourg. His physical condition was so serious that Monroe believed his days were numbered. In the same belief the English papers published an account of his execution, headlined, "Glorious News for Old England," with elaborate details of his dying recantation.

He himself had little hope of recovery. "I have a letter from Thomas Paine," Madison wrote Jefferson, "which . . . contains some keen observations on the administration of government here. It appears that the neglect to claim him as an American citizen . . . or even to interfere in any way in his favor, has filled him with an indelible rancor against the President. . . . His letter to me is in the style of a dying one, and we hear that he is since dead of an abscess in his side, brought on by his imprisonment."

At this time, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe had parted political company with the President, with the greatest respect for his integrity and honesty, and much distrust of his chosen advisers.

Paine had written two letters to the President acquainting him with his situation, and had received no reply. In all probability these were withheld from Washington, whose interference would undoubtedly have released the prisoner. Washington had publicly acknowledged his own and the nation's debt to Paine, who had

loved and respected him above all other men. Yet Monroe had come over without a word from the President as to Paine's situation; this was the rankling bitterness, that a friend whom he had faithfully served, had deserted him in his extremity, abandoned him to a hideous fate. Morris had played his hand so skillfully that the full extent of his machinations was not known; he had not only poisoned the President's mind against Paine, but warned of the danger of interference.

The Americans in Paris, strongly pro-French, no doubt, added political fuel to Paine's burning sense of personal injury; Washington was denounced in the most intemperate language for his stand on the Jay treaty. Paine had seen Marat and Robespierre turn turtle morally, spill their principles, and chop off the heads of their friends. Between personal grievance and the political gossip in Paris, he came to believe that Washington had gone the same road; he wrote a letter to the President elaborating this belief, which Monroe dissuaded him from sending. *The Age of Reason* had made him an Ishmaelite; already he had roused enough enmity to last for over a century; why, therefore, pick a quarrel with a popular hero? Such reasoning made no appeal to Paine; it was no doubt out of consideration for Monroe's official position that he laid the reproachful letter by, and poured out his grievances into the safe and sympathetic ear of Samuel Adams, now Governor of Massachusetts:

"When I came from America it was my intention to return the next year, and I have intended the same every year since. The case I believe is that, as I am embarked in the Revolution, I do not like to leave till it is finished,

notwithstanding the dangers I have run. I am now almost the only survivor of those who began this Revolution, and I know not how it is that I have escaped. I know, however, that I owe nothing to the government of America. The executive department has never directed either the former or the present Minister to enquire whether I was dead or alive, in prison or in liberty, what the cause of imprisonment was, or whether there was any service or assistance it could render. Mr. Monroe acted voluntarily in the case, and reclaimed me as an American citizen; for the pretense for my imprisonment was that I was a foreigner, born in England.

“The internal scene here from the 31st of May, 1793, to the fall of Robespierre has been terrible. I was shut up in the prison eleven months, and I find by the papers of Robespierre . . . that I was designed for a worse fate. . . .

“I know not how matters are going on your side the water, but I think everything is not as it ought to be. The appointment of G. Morris to be Minister here was the most unfortunate and the most injudicious appointment that could be made. I wrote this opinion to Mr. Jefferson at the time, and I said the same to Morris. Had he not been removed at the time he was I think the two countries would have been involved in a quarrel, for it is a fact, that he would either have been ordered away or put in arrestation; for he gave every reason to suspect that he was secretly a British Emissary.

“What Mr. Jay is about in England I do not know; but is it possible that any man who has contributed to the Independence of America, and to free her from the tyranny of the British government, can read without shame

and indignation the note of Jay to Grenville? *That the United States has no other resource than in the justice and magnanimity of his Majesty*, is a satire upon the Declaration of Independence, and exhibits a spirit of meanness on the part of America, that, were it true, I should be ashamed of her. Such a declaration may suit the spaniel character of Aristocracy, but it cannot agree with the manly character of a Republican. . . . God bless you, remember me among the circle of our friends, and tell them how much I wish to be once more among them."

Paine's letter to Washington, suppressed by Monroe's persuasion, was full of personal reproach: "You knew enough of my character to be assured that I could not have deserved imprisonment in France, and without knowing anything more than this, you had sufficient ground to have taken some interest in my safety. Every motive arising from recollection ought to have suggested to you the consistency of such a measure. But I cannot find that you have so much as directed any inquiry to be made. . . . Is this what I ought to have expected from America after the part I acted towards her? . . . After the revolution in America had been established, you rested at home to partake its advantages, and I ventured into new scenes of difficulty to extend the principles which that revolution had produced. In the progress of events you beheld yourself a president in America and me a prisoner in France: you folded your arms, forgot your friend, and became silent." It is quite understandable that in the circumstances Washington was not eager for Paine's homecoming, but it is difficult to explain why Monroe was not instructed to make even a



civil inquiry into the fate of a man who had so faithfully served the country and the President.

After Monroe had been recalled, and the Jay treaty had made "America contemptible in the eyes of Europe," Paine's dark suspicions could no longer be downed. In a letter published in America, he tramped over Washington's career as he had gone through the Old Testament, with a destroying ax, and left nothing standing. As a general he was a blunderer, as a statesman deceitful, as a friend treacherous; a "cold hermaphrodite quality" made him incapable of friendship. While in the mood for hacking, he delivered a few blows at John Adams, who had proposed an hereditary presidency, and at that "disguised traitor John Jay," who advocated a life term for senators, in addition to his other sins.

"If I have any resentment, you must acknowledge that I have not been hasty in declaring it, neither would it now be declared . . . if the cause of it did not unite itself as well with your public as with your private character. . . . Could I have known to what degree of corruption and perfidy the administrative part of the government of America had descended, I could have been at no loss to have understood the reservedness of Mr. Washington towards me during my imprisonment."

Paine was not the man to swap horses when crossing a stream; for the sake of unity he went further than men are usually willing to go. Even treason did not wholly absolve him from gratitude to a man who had once served the cause faithfully. If he had been in America, no doubt he would have been more temperate, but he was an exile, stricken in body and spirit. The hope of an all-European glorious revolution was dead, the situation in America



was disheartening, everywhere the outlook was dark. The attack on Washington was made in ignorance of all the facts; these he had twice written to obtain, and had received no reply. His accusations were in great measure unjust; a painful episode to Washington, but to Paine a tragedy so long as he lived. "I have always remembered your former friendship with pleasure. I suffer a loss by your depriving me of it." Even after Washington's death, he went about reciting his services to the father of the country, ending with the plaint: "He left me to perish when I was in prison."

Suffering under a similar combination of boils and mental anguish, the patient Job made moan: "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. . . . Let me alone that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death." Paine admired but did not emulate Job. He was buoyed up by the hope of winning the fight against ecclesiastical power, "a machine of government" for the subjection of men. With another battle in prospect, he had no desire to take a little comfort.

He had been deserted in his extremity; it would not have been strange if his "indelible rancor" had extended to the whole human race. Toward the cowed masses he felt no bitterness. "I have always observed," he said in his speech for the King's life, "that the great mass of the people are always just, both in their intention and their object, but the true method of attaining such purpose does not always appear at once." He was a sick but never a tired radical. "I was not persecuted by the *people*, either in England or France. The proceedings in both

countries were the effects of despotism existing in their respective governments. But, even if my persecution had originated in the people at large, my principles and conduct would still have remained the same. Principles which are influenced and subject to the control of tyranny have not their foundation in the heart." To him the Terrorist outbreak was nothing more than an abscess in the side of the Revolution.

To Samuel Adams he wrote: "I endangered my life in the first place, by opposing in the Convention the execution of the king, and by laboring to show them that they were trying the monarchy and not the man . . . and I endangered it a second time by opposing atheism, and yet *some* of your priests, for I do not believe that all are perverse, cry out in the war whoop of monarchist priestcraft, what an Infidel, what a wicked man is Thomas Paine! They might as well add, for he believes in God, and is against the shedding of blood."

If Paine had entertained the thought of dying, the war whoop of monarchist priestcraft revived the will to live. Politics would never be right while religion was wrong; set a people right, and they would set their government right. "If we look at what was the condition of France under the *ancien régime*, we cannot acquit the priests of corrupting the morals of the nation." Religious reform now riveted his thought; he labored on the second part of *The Age of Reason*, mowing down Old Testament cruelty with a sharpened scythe.

A flood of print washed over *The Age of Reason*—dreary reading, little argument and much abuse. Of the clergy, Dr. Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, was almost alone in admitting Paine's sincerity. "There is a philosophical sublimity in some of your ideas when speaking of the

Creator of the Universe." In defending the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, however, the Bishop made out a sorry case for a merciful God. Paine was mistaken about the fate of the virgins, a fate which had so excited his wrath. They had not been delivered over to debauchery by command of God, but to slavery. Which did not improve matters much, for a fanatical abolitionist.

The strong arm of the law was now stretched out to protect the Bible and destroy its critics; the church served the government, the government stood by the church. Thomas Williams was tried for publishing the blasphemous *Age of Reason*, and blasphemy was sedition, for in the judicial opinion of Lord Kenyon, "The Christian religion is part of the law of the land." Lord Erskine, who defended Paine in *The Rights of Man* trial, had become, to his great profit, orthodox and conservative. He had lost government patronage by that defense, and never more was guilty of a weakness of the kind. Erskine saw a great light and followed it so faithfully that he had now become Lord Erskine, and to insure his loyalty, prosecuting attorney for the state.

The speeches for the state are wonderfully illuminating as to the underlying motives of the prosecution. It was the "incredible industry" with which this malignant book had been circulated among common people "whose minds cannot be supposed to be conversant with subjects of that sort" which chiefly worried Percival, Crown Counsel. Therefore, "with respect to the matter, in my conscience I call it treason, though technically to the laws of the country it is not." Conscience sometimes puts in a strange appearance when the laws of the country prove inadequate to a situation.

Lord Kenyon, the presiding judge, seemed a bit fuddled; only a malignant motive, he thought, could account for the writing of such a book. He was uncertain how the prosecution had started, but believed it was instigated by a society of gentlemen concerned for preserving the public morals. Destitution was alarmingly prevalent, to the detriment of "public morals."

Lord Erskine's speech was a gem. *The Age of Reason* must be suppressed in the interest of human happiness: "I can conceive a distressed but virtuous father," he rolled off smoothly, "surrounded by children looking up to him for bread when he has none to give them, sinking under the last day's labour and unequal to the next, yet still looking up with confidence to the hour when all tears shall be wiped away . . . bearing the burden laid upon him by a mysterious Providence which he adores, and looking forward with exultation to the revealed promises of his Creator, when he shall be greater than the greatest and happier than the happiest of mankind." There were many such distressed fathers in England, whose children lacked bread, and whose tears would need to be wiped away. Lord Erskine had no desire to put the Creator to unnecessary trouble; he wiped away his own tears.

The defense threw the prosecution ranks into consternation by serving notice that they would produce the sacred Scriptures in court, and read passages from them. This the prosecution declared was an insult to the dignity and authority of the Court; the King had taken an oath to maintain the Christian religion, "*as it is promulgated by God in the Holy Scriptures.*" Lord Kenyon ruled that passages might be cited from this part of the fundamental law of the land, but not read in court. The defense re-



turned grateful thanks to his lordship for sparing them the recital of revolting atrocities. A packed jury brought in a verdict of guilty; it was now established by law that the Bible was written "under the immediate superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

Paine's spirit rose within him as he entered the lists. "Strange stories are told of the Creator in that book," he wrote Erskine. "If the Bible be the word of God, it needs not the wretched aid of prosecution to support it, and you might with as much propriety make a law to protect the sunshine as to protect the Bible, if the Bible like the sun be the work of God. . . . Leave the Bible to itself, God will take care of it if he had anything to do with it."

His critics laid much stress on the fact that pious and learned men had labored to clear up scriptural obscurities. "What!" Paine shouted, "does not the Creator of the Universe, the Fountain of all Wisdom, the Origin of all Science, the Author of all Knowledge, the God of Order and Harmony, know how to write? The writings . . . even of Thomas Paine need no commentator to explain . . . and re-arrange their several parts to render them intelligible. . . . Certainly then did the God of all perfection condescend to write or dictate a book, that book would be as perfect as himself is perfect."

"Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" This was a stock argument of Paine's critics. Certainly, he replied, "if it feels hurt, and could talk."

For a dying man, and a dipsomaniac at that, he was amazingly active. Morris had reported him as too contemptible for the guillotine; that contempt vanished with Monroe's appearance. Once more he had become the



great champion of liberty; "a man who has honored his age by his energy in defense of the rights of humanity," said the French. From a sickbed he went to take his place in the Convention, again in the throes of constitution making. "The Convention, to repair as much as lay in their power the injustice I had sustained, invited me publicly and unanimously to return into the Convention, and which I accepted, to show I could bear an injury without permitting it to injure my principles or my disposition. It is not because right principles have been violated that they are to be abandoned." The men who had once stood beside him on that floor had all fallen in the fray. The Convention voted unanimously "that permission be given Thomas Paine to deliver his sentiments on the declaration of rights and the Constitution."

Contempt, if it ever existed, had been changed into adulation by Mr. Monroe's magic wand, adulation which took a more substantial form than flowery speeches. Paine's name headed the list of those to whom the nation owed a debt, whose services entitled them to a pension from the government. He was "one who by two immortal works, has deserved well of the human race, and consecrated liberty in two worlds." Though a lavish giver, he was a chary receiver; the pension was refused. His popularity became really embarrassing. Minister Monroe proposed to send him on a diplomatic mission to America, and was seriously informed by his late jailers that they could not dispense with the valuable services of Citizen Paine.

Old Admiral Penn, father of the famous William, departed this life in the serene hope that the Quakers would "make an end of the priests till the end of the world."

Paine was eager to contribute to that work. The established churches of that time were powerful and tyrannical; much of the mischief of the world, Paine believed, could be traced to their false teaching. "No person can act religion for another. Every person must perform it for himself; and all that a priest can do is to take it away from him; he wants nothing but his money, and then to riot in the spoil and laugh at his credulity." Religious persecution and intolerance were the real causes of infidelity, "so that people thought it better not to believe anything at all than to believe a multitude of things that occasioned so much mischief in the world."

Science, the study of natural law, had made life significant to Paine; he was a proselyting evangelist, bent on making the lives of all men significant. The Society of Theophilanthrophiles was organized to build for the masses a bridge to the grandeurs of the universe. The name, he explained, meant "Lovers of God and Man, or Adorers of God and Friends of Man." The ethical teachings of the sages of all time were studied; geographical boundary lines were ignored. By teaching the worker his relation to universal law, work was to be dignified. "The mechanic of every profession will be taught the mathematical principles necessary to render him proficient in his art. The cultivator will there see developed the principles of vegetation; and at the same time they will be led to see the hand of God in all things." Men who had advanced the cause of human freedom were honored by festivals. The catholicity of the society is shown by the names selected for honor—Washington, St. Vincent de Paul, Socrates, Rousseau. He did not carry his private grievance into his religion; America was entitled to a

place of honor, and Washington was the man to represent his country.

Religious leaders kept Paine busy. The Bishop of Llandaff, like Lord Erskine, was impressed by the mysteries of Providence in the matter of poverty; his views were expounded in a sermon: "On the wisdom of God, in having made both rich and poor." Pious nonsense, Paine retorted; "the book of which you claim he is the author tells you that male and female created he them, and gave them the earth for their inheritance." This gave him an idea for restoring to the dispossessed their heritage.

The plan he worked out contains the germ of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*. It was published in pamphlet form: "Agrarian Justice opposed to Agrarian Law and Agrarian Monopoly, Being a plan for Meliorating the condition of Men by creating in every Nation a National Fund, To pay every person when arriving at the age of twenty-one years the Sum of fifteen pounds stg. to enable Him or Her to begin the world, and also Ten pounds per annum during Life to every person now Living of the age of fifty years, and to all others when they shall arrive at that Age, to enable them to live in Old age without wretchedness, and to go decently out of the World."

He argued that economic justice, while raising the standard of living for the submerged class, would insure the possessing class against losses by revolution. He scouted Mr. Burke's idea of delightful charity. "It is not a charity but a right; not bounty but justice that I am pleading for. The contrast of affluence and wretchedness continually meeting the eye, is like dead and living bodies chained together. Though I care as little about riches as

any man, I am a friend to riches because they are capable of doing good. I care not how affluent some may be, provided that none be miserable in consequence of it." A charitable man may satisfy his conscience, but never his heart; he can do but little to relieve general misery. "It is only by organizing civilization upon such principles as to act like a system of pulleys, that the whole weight of misery can be removed."

Civilization had elevated a few far above, but sunk the many far below, the condition of barbarians. "The life of an Indian is a continual holiday, compared with the poor of Europe."

No fault attached to those who now benefit by the unjust system, "unless they adopt the crime by opposing justice. The fault is in the system, and it has stolen imperceptibly upon the world. . . . But the fault can be made to reform itself by successive generations, without diminishing or deranging the property of any of the present possessors." "A generous man would not wish to see" a bad system continue, "and a just man will rejoice to see it abolished."

"Civilization . . . or that which is so called, has operated . . . to make one part of society more affluent, and the other more wretched, than would have been the lot of either in the natural state. . . . The thing, therefore, now to be done, is to remedy the evils, and preserve the benefits that have arisen to society, by passing from the natural to that which is called the civilized state."

Changes are usually effected by revolutions, which are cruel and expensive; it would be prudent and humane to bring them about by reason. Excessive wealth is an insult upon wretchedness, "and serves to call the right of



it in question, the case of property becomes critical, and it is only in a system of justice that the possessor can contemplate security." It is land monopoly which "has dispossessed more than half of the inhabitants of every nation of their natural inheritance, without providing for them, as ought to have been done, an indemnification for that loss, and has thereby created a species of poverty and wretchedness that did not exist before." Every member of society is entitled to "compensation in part, for the loss of his or her natural inheritance." Property "is the *effect of society*"; it is as impossible for an individual to become rich without the aid of society "as it is for him to make land originally." Therefore he ought to give, "on every principle of justice, of gratitude, and of civilization, a part of that accumulation back again to the society from whence it came."

"Every proprietor . . . owes to the community a *ground-rent*, for I know no better term to express the idea by, for the land which he holds: and it is from this ground-rent that the fund . . . is to be raised." This revenue belongs of right to society, and not to the government. In every country the poor have become an hereditary caste, more fall into it than rise out of it. As a matter of national economy, it would be less expensive to prevent poverty than to carry the weight of it.

Accepting Mr. Pitt's estimate of the national wealth, he proposes to show "how much better money may be employed, than in wasting it as he has done, on the wild project of setting up Bourbon kings. What, in the name of heaven, are Bourbon kings to the people of England? . . . Mr. Pitt has already laid on more new taxes to be raised annually on the people of England, and that



for supporting the despotism of Austria and the Bourbons, against the liberties of France, than would annually pay all the sums proposed in this plan."

The apologists for economic injustice claimed that the worker "would not save [money] against old age, nor be much better for it in the interim. Make, then, society the treasurer, to guard it for him in a common fund; for it is no reason, that because he might not make good use of it for himself, that another should take it." Governments had not encouraged the masses to independence: "Despotic government supports itself by abject civilization, in which the debasement of the human mind, and wretchedness in the mass of the people, are the chief criterions. . . . It is a revolution in the state of civilization, that will give perfection to the revolution in France."

Paine concludes characteristically: "I have no property in France to become subject to the plan I propose. What I have, which is not much, is in the United States of America. But I will pay one hundred pounds sterling towards this fund in France, the instant it shall be established; and I will pay the same sum in England, whenever a similar establishment shall take place in that country." He was in no immediate danger of parting with two hundred pounds. The political revolution, which he saw merely as a preliminary to better things, could be effected by a convulsion. The resulting revolution of civilization was steady uphill work.

## Chapter XVII

### DESPISED AND REJECTED

In a free nation it matters not whether individuals reason well or ill, it is sufficient that they do reason. Truth arises from the collision, and from hence springs liberty, which is a security from the effects of reasoning.—MONTESQUIEU.

If my government is made to stand it has nothing to fear from paper shot.—CROMWELL.

THE advice bequeathed to posterity by the Father of the country—to keep clear of foreign entanglements—was the acquired wisdom of bitter experience. Educated in the same hard school, his successor, Monroe, formulated that advice into a policy. England and France made a football field of America, and the native factions were so absorbed in the game that Washington's entreaties to see America first fell on deaf ears. Between the violently pro-French democrats and the violently pro-English aristocrats, he despaired of getting in a word edgewise for the free and independent nation which had been proclaimed, but not established. He was bored by spectacular patriotism, and distrusted it. His own soldiers had been gravely reproved by him for gleefully decapitating a leaden George III.

The French Revolution must have been a breath-arresting episode to the orderly-minded, elderly Virginian, who, like the Apostle Paul, desired that all things, including revolutions, be done decently and in order. The President's sympathies were those of a conservative, pros-

perous gentleman, who in a very difficult position tried to be fair to all parties. The zealous Citizen Genêt, in attempting to commandeer the nation, offended his sense of propriety, and France was asked to recall him. France was only too willing to oblige, on condition that Washington would take back his friend, Gouverneur Morris. In a spirit of fair play all around, the pro-English and pro-Bourbon Morris was shifted to the Court of St. James's, and the pro-French Monroe sent to France to succeed him.

Washington's acquiescence irritated Morris, who, however, withdrew, "with no sacrifice either of personal or national dignity, and I believe I should have obtained everything if the American government had refused to recall me." Against Monroe, whom he had so shabbily treated, he nursed a grudge. "I did not write you by Mr. Monroe," he wrote Robert Livingston in 1803, "because he and I are not on such terms of intimacy as to ask his care of a letter."

Mr. Morris never did discover the crimes charged against the Englishman, Thomas Paine. He had better luck in picking up gossip from interested English diplomats, and French emigrants, especially such things as were of ill report; without scruple he passed this gossip along. Morris and Monroe were working at cross purposes, one for a treaty of commerce and friendship with France, the other for a treaty with England, throwing France over. For various reasons Washington favored the English treaty, and Morris was on "such terms of intimacy" with the President that he had his rival at a disadvantage. He retailed to him the royalist gossip, that Monroe was plotting against the President and had as-

sured the French that with their support "he and his friends would turn Washington out." Whether or not Morris achieved, as in Paine's case, an "intended effect," Monroe was summarily recalled, no doubt to the satisfaction of Morris' English friends.

A year and a half of the society of the "filthy little atheist," whom they had sheltered, had apparently not resulted in the contempt of the Monroes; they planned to sail together. Paine accompanied his hosts as far as the coast, where he thought better of it, having a hunch that the inquisitive British cruisers lying in wait outside the port boded him no good. His suspicion saved him; Monroe's ship was searched to the hold by the British, in the expectation of laying hold of their infamous foe, him of the involved citizenship. While they had him cornered in France, he drowned his nostalgia not in brandy, but in hard work, and gave back as good as he got. He attacked England's abuse of sea power, of which he was a victim, and which was endlessly humiliating to America and a shackle on her commerce.

He proposed an organized concerted challenge to English hegemony on the high seas. His *Maritime Compact* called for a maritime declaration of independence by an "unarmed association" of the powers. Jefferson had it printed for him in the United States. Another pamphlet, *On the Jacobinism of the English at Sea*, was written, he informed Jefferson, "when the English made their insolent and impolitic expedition to Denmark." America, he hoped, would sign no treaty without "reserving to herself the right of joining in an association of Nations for the protection of the Rights of Neutral Commerce, and the security of the Liberty of the Seas."

The British government was to Paine the abomination of desolation, the King the object of his oldest and most fondly cherished enmity. His friends and followers were now being hunted into jail, exile, and financial ruin. "Good God," protested Charles Fox, "that a man should be sent to Botany Bay for advising another to read Paine's book!" Paine, however, could be trusted to thrust at his enemy's most vulnerable spot. The Bank of England was shaky, he maintained in *The Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance*, and he predicted that it would suspend payment. This pamphlet was translated and industriously circulated by the French government throughout Europe. The pamphlet concludes, with bland satisfaction: "As an individual citizen of America, and as far as an individual can go, I have revenged (if I may use the expression without any immoral meaning) the piratical depredations committed on American commerce by the English government. I have retaliated for France on the subject of finance: and I conclude with retorting on Mr. Pitt the expression he used against France, and say, that the English system of finance, '*is on the verge, nay in the gulf of bankruptcy.*'" The Bank suspended payment, as he had foretold; with a chuckling sense of humor, he turned over the profits of his pamphlet to prisoners for debt in English jails.

The government was alarmed into making refutations, one of which was written by the "crafty clerk" in Lord Hawksbury's Board of Trade and Plantations, Chalmers, who has already been mentioned as the man subsidized by the English government to blacken Paine's reputation. To the assumed name of Francis Oldys he mendaciously affixed a degree from the University of Pennsylvania,



and to insure a reading by Paineites, he added to his scurrilous *Life of Paine* the subtitle, *With a Defense of his Writings*. The object of his calumny was little disturbed: "I wish his own life and those of the Cabinet were as good," was all he had to say in reply. Chalmers' well-paid pen did not fend off trouble for the Bank, nor did it injure Paine's influence with the people he aimed to reach, though it long furnished his enemies with paper shot for an attack.

The Little Corporal had now appeared on the scene to regiment the French. He slept, he said, with *The Rights of Man* under his pillow, and professed a lively interest in the author of that great book, who, in his opinion, deserved to be honored in every city of the world by a statue of gold. Napoleon himself did not set the example, though he seems to have had a genuine respect for Paine, whom, on more than one occasion, he consulted on matters of state. Probably a mutual enmity was the cement of their brief association.

English state papers had long perpetuated a pleasing fiction; the sovereign was, by the grace of God, "King of Great Britain, Ireland and France," even when he was receiving the bounty of his brother across the Channel. This pleasantry was irritating to French Republicans, who refused to sign a treaty until his British Majesty's titles were abbreviated in accordance with fact. Paine thought a further abbreviation desirable. George III., as hereditary Elector of Hanover, had effected an Anglo-German understanding, to which unholy alliance with German despotism, Paine attributed England's "immense national debt, the ruin of her finances, and the insolvency of her bank. . . . It will be necessary to dis-

solve [this connection]. Let the Elector retire to his electorate, and the world will have peace."

The outlook for his Majesty's retirement brightened when Napoleon broached to Paine a plan for invading England. The intention was, Paine wrote Jefferson, "to give the people of England an opportunity of forming a government for themselves and thereby bringing about peace." A month before, Paine had written: "I find that the English government has seized upon a thousand pounds sterling which I had in the hands of a friend." In furtherance of Napoleon's benevolent design, however, he managed to scrape up a small sum, which he sent with a letter to the Council:

"Citizen Representatives,—

"Though it is not convenient for me in the present situation of my affairs to subscribe to the loan towards the descent upon England, my economy permits me to make a small patriotic contribution. I send herewith a hundred livres, and with it all the wishes of my heart for the success of the descent, and a voluntary offer of any service I can render to promote it. There will be no lasting peace for France, nor for the world, until the tyranny and corruption of the English government be abolished. . . . As to those men whether in England, Scotland or Ireland, who, like Robespierre in France, are covered with crimes, they, like him, have no other resource than in committing more. But the mass of the people are friends of liberty; tyranny and taxation oppress them, and they deserve to be free." It is significant that this was written in the year of the Irish Rebellion,

of which Paine had foreknowledge through his friend, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who hoped for French assistance.

The wool which Napoleon pulled over Paine's eyes soon fell from them. The English invasion scheme, he wrote Jefferson, was merely "a feint to cover the expedition to Egypt." Paine had a penchant for foretelling events, and if Walter Savage Landor correctly reported him, he predicted no good end for Napoleon. "He is wilful, headstrong, proud, morose, presumptuous; he will be guided no longer; he has pulled the pad from his forehead, and will break his nose or bruise his cranium against every table, chair and brick in the room, until at last he must be sent to the hospital." His friends relate that Paine was always outspoken in his criticism of the dictator; that he was "quite fearless, and talked as freely as ever after Napoleon's supremacy." Yet he was never disturbed, while his friend Bonneville, who discovered a likeness between Oliver Cromwell and Bonaparte, was rewarded with imprisonment.

Paine was now sixty-five, and much aged by mental and physical suffering. He was no longer the pink of elegance, his dress was careless, and prison illness had not improved his appearance. His temper, always ardent and combative, now became irascible. His French fellow citizens had begun to get on his nerves; the Terrorists were right, he failed to understand the genius of French regeneration. An old friend who escaped the net of the English government called on him and found that "time [had] made dreadful ravages over his whole frame, and a settled melancholy was visible on his countenance. . . .

Although he did not recognize me for a considerable time, he conversed with his usual affability. At length I thought it time to remove his suspense, and stated an incident which instantly recalled me to his mind. It is impossible to describe the sudden change which this effected; his countenance brightened, he pressed me by the hand, and a tear stole down his cheek."

The old man broke loose when the conversation turned on France; "they have shed enough blood for liberty, and now they have it in perfection. This is not a country for an honest man to live in; they do not understand anything at all of the principles of a free government, and the best way is to leave them to themselves. You see they have conquered all Europe only to make it more miserable than it was before. . . . 'Republic,' he exclaimed, 'do you call this a Republic? I know of no Republic in the world except America, which is the only country for such men as you and I. . . . You are a young man and may see better times, but I have done with Europe and its slavish politics.' "

His thought was now centered on reforming religion; politics had been crowded into second place. Before the fight for human freedom could be won, ecclesiastical power must be broken, and superstition destroyed. He harangued his friend's dinner party: "Nothing would stop him. In vain I attempted to change the subject, by employing every artifice in my power, and even attacking with vehemence his political principles. He returned to the charge with unabated ardour. I called upon him for a song though I had never heard him sing in my life. He struck up one of his own composition; but the instant it was finished he resumed his favorite topic."



Pottering with his bridge models afforded him some diversion; the more so as he intended to present them to America. "In shewing me one day the beautiful models of two bridges he had devised he observed that Dr. Franklin once told him that 'books are written to please, houses built for great men, churches for priests, but no bridges for the people.' These models exhibit an extraordinary degree not only of skill but of taste. The largest is nearly four feet in length; the ironwork, the chains, and every other article belonging to it, were forged and manufactured by himself. . . . He was offered £3000 for these models and refused it."

It was now fifteen years since Paine had crossed the ocean for a year's visit, years which had left a scar on the world's history, and on the spirit of the man who had been "a volunteer to the world." He was as sure of the ultimate result of the Revolution as of the continued operation of the law of gravity; some day Europe would be led into the Promised Land, but not in his day. His time was short; it was his desire to spend it in the only Republic in the world. "I shall bid adieu to restless wretched Europe," he wrote Elihu Palmer. He suggested to the President that by sailing in a government ship he might escape the clutches of piratical John Bulls. Jefferson promptly agreed: "Mr. Dawson is charged with an order to the captain of the *Maryland* to receive and accommodate you back, if you can be ready to depart on such short warning."

"I am in hopes," the President optimistically added, "that you will find us returned generally to sentiments worthy of former times. In these it will be your glory to have steadily labored, and with as much effect as any



man living. That you may long live to continue your useful labors and to reap the reward in the thankfulness of nations, is my sincere prayer. Accept the assurances of my high esteem and affectionate regard."

The thankfulness of nations had an extremely low visibility at the moment; a roar went up from Jefferson's foes; synonyms were exhausted in the effort to express patriotic horror adequately. "What!" gasped the *New England Palladium*, "invite to the United States that lying, drunken, brutal infidel, who rejoices in the opportunity of basking and wallowing in the confusion, bloodshed, rapine and murder in which his soul delights."

Dennie's *Portfolio* refused to believe that even so great a scoundrel as Jefferson would dare thus to imperil the nation. "If during the present season of national abasement, infatuation, folly and vice, any portent could surprise, sober men would be utterly confounded by an article current in all the newspapers, that the loathsome Thomas Paine, a drunken atheist and the scavenger of faction, is invited to return in a national ship to America by the first magistrate of a free people. A measure so enormously preposterous we cannot yet believe has been adopted, and it would demand firmer nerves than those possessed by Mr. Jefferson to hazard such an insult to the moral sense of the nation. If that rebel rascal should come to preach from his bible to our populace, it would be time for every honest and insulted man of dignity to flee to some Zoar as from another Sodom, to shake off the very dust from his feet, and to abandon America." It was proposed: "Let Jefferson and his blasphemous crony dangle from the same gallows."

The pure atmosphere was not clouded by the dust of

fleeing honesty, nor was there a general exodus of insulted dignity. It would have given Paine pleasure to insult the moral sense of the *Portfolio*, if it could be done without embarrassment to his friend, the President. "Your very kindly letter," he wrote, "gave me the real sensation of happy satisfaction. . . . I congratulate America on your election. There has been no circumstance with respect to America since the time of her revolution that excited so much attention and expectation in France, England, Ireland and Scotland . . . nor any . . . which . . . has given more general joy. I thank you for the opportunity you have given me of returning in the *Maryland*, but I shall wait the return of the vessel that brings Mr. Livingston "

The election which overjoyed European radicals plunged American conservatives into deepest distress, and their suffering was not borne in silence. In the heyday of their power, they had vigorously suppressed freedom of speech. The voluble Irishman, Matthew Lyons, was heavily fined and imprisoned for accusing the President of "ridiculous pomp, idle parade and selfish avarice." It was a prison offense to criticize the King of Spain, of all imaginable persons. When the democrats gained control, the ousted conservatives saw no further need for suppression; they were for full and free expression, in language vitriolic. The change of tactics began with Jefferson's candidacy; patriots howled with terror, and summoned the faithful to save the country: "Awake and be up and doing! If Mr. Jefferson is elected the taxes will fall on the landed interests, all the churches will be overturned, none but Frenchmen employed by the government, and the monstrous system of liberty and equality,

with all its horrid consequences, as experienced in France and St. Domingo, will inevitably be introduced."

After the election the abuse became, if possible, more violent; Jefferson was accused of every crime in the catalogue, including the paternity of all the little pickaninies on his plantation. Even the sacred scripture of American liberty was blasphemed as the work of this infamous man. Federalist organs could not restrain their emotion when they mentioned that rebellious, dangerous, seditious document, the Declaration of Independence. It was not a land of peace and tranquillity to which Paine was homeward bound.

For a man who claimed, "The world is my country; to do good is my religion," Paine had a rough time of it. His surfeit of citizenships involved him in endless trouble. Convicted of treason in the land of his birth, English ships prowled the ocean in search of him. He was mutilated physically and spiritually in the land which had adopted him with acclaim and royal honors. The land of his most profound devotion loudly and abusively repudiated the godfather of the country. In short, Universal Citizen Paine was the pariah of the world.

If his enemies were venomous, he had many distinguished and loyal friends. The faithful Rickman crossed the Channel to bid him Godspeed and to assist in preparations for his comfort on the long voyage. He was providentially prevented from sailing on a vessel which was lost at sea, another hairbreadth escape to add to the list with which he twitted his sanctimonious foes. After two unadventurous months at sea, he landed in Baltimore at the end of October, 1802. Every paper in the country, he wrote Rickman, "was filled with applause or abuse"—

chiefly abuse. He greeted his friends and challenged his enemies in a public letter: "To my friends, and to my enemies, if I have any, for I ought to have none in America. . . . The government of England has honored me with a thousand martyrdoms by burning me in effigy in every town in that country, and their hirelings in America may do the same." While there was life, there was fight.

To the very last ditch he doggedly maintained his religious and political faith. "The principles of the French Revolution were good, and the men who conducted it honest. Of those who began that revolution I am almost the only survivor, and that through a thousand dangers. I owe this not to the prayers of priests nor to the piety of hypocrites, but to the continued protection of Providence." Why not accept these hairbreadth escapes as evidence of divine favor, he ironically suggested, since the pious crow over the misfortunes of "infidels" as evidence of divine wrath?

In his letters to friends, Paine insisted that his health was excellent, since he made it a practice to use food and drink sparingly, and to feed his mind without stint. Nevertheless, prison had left its indelible imprint; paralysis had taken the vigor out of his stride; his face gave color to the widespread rumors of his bibulous habits. But from that disfigured face the piercing eyes still twinkled with the old light of battle; his eye was not dimmed, nor the fire of the spirit quenched.

Amid all the political noise and hubbub, and the lamentations of outraged orthodoxy, Thomas Jefferson displayed more firmness of nerve than the *Portfolio* credited him with; Paine was invited to the presidential mansion.



It was the scandal of the day; the President, his six foot two and a half of lanky frame carelessly clad, strolled through the streets of the capital arm in arm with his "blasphemous crony." One of his biographers calls it "the manliest act of Jefferson's life." It required ten leading editorials to express the profound disgust of the *United States Gazette*. The Federalists evolved a diabolical republican trinity, "Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and the father of lies." The President's "love of liberty was neither more rational, generous or social than that of the wolf or tiger."

John Adams, who always found something to worry about, wrote Mr. Dalton that Jefferson's "patronage of Paine and Freneau and his entanglements with characters and politicks which have been pernicious are, and have long been a source of inquietude and anxiety to me." Gouverneur Morris, now restored to the bosom of the Republic, swelled the calamity chorus: "The employment and confidence in adventurers from abroad [meaning Paine] will sooner or later rouse the pride and indignation of this country." This was sheer balderdash; Paine was no more an adventurer from abroad than Morris' friends, Alexander Hamilton and Robert Morris, or John Paul Jones, now gone to his rest. America had reason to remember gratefully the services of adventurers from abroad.

The old politician, Samuel Adams, was much troubled, though inclined to be fair withal, and not unfriendly to a veteran of '76: "Your *Common Sense* and your *Crisis* unquestionably awakened the public mind, and led people loudly to call for a Declaration of our national Independence. . . . But when I heard you had turned



your mind to a defense of infidelity I felt myself much astonished and more grieved. . . . Our friend the President of the United States has been calumniated for his liberal sentiments by men who have attributed that liberality to a latent design to promote the cause of infidelity. These and other slanders have been made without a shadow of proof. . . . Neither religion nor liberty can long subsist in the tumult of altercation, and amid the noise and violence of faction." Paine replied to his "dear and venerable friend" affectionately, thanking him for his frankness: "What, my good friend, do you call believing in God infidelity?"

Fortunately for the peace of Adams' Calvinist mind, he never saw his friend the President's "wee little book" on the gospels, "which I call the philosophy of Jesus. It is a document in proof that I am a *real Christian* . . . very different from the Platonists who call *me* Infidel and *themselves* Christians and preachers of the gospel. . . . They have compounded from the heathen mysteries a system beyond the comprehension of man, of which the great Reformer of the vicious ethics and deism of the Jews, were he to return to earth, would not recognize one feature."

Mr. Jefferson postponed the writing of his commentary on the gospels to a more convenient season; at the time of Paine's visit he was attending strictly to politics. In the circumstances, Paine did not linger long at the seat of government. To allay the Federalist-fostered fear that the churches were in imminent danger of destruction, he publicly disavowed any intention of accepting a government post, though Jefferson was willing to give him any office he could fill.

As he headed north to visit old haunts and renew old friendships, his fellow citizens were by no means indifferent to his presence. In that part of the country through which he had retreated with the disheartened Continental army, rallying it to new hope and courage, he was greeted with brass bands playing the Rogue's March. Bordentown, his old home, welcomed him with pictures of the devil and Tom Paine mounted on a broomstick; gossip invariably coupled these two names.

The timid Dr. Rush, signer of the Declaration, and a resident of the city in which Paine had given his last cent to the American cause, drew away in trembling respectability: "I did not wish to renew my acquaintance with him." Stagecoaches running to New York refused him a seat; one cautious Jehu whose horses had been struck by lightning was frankly averse to provoking the wrath of the Almighty. All of which was conclusive proof to its author that *The Age of Reason* was his most valuable service to mankind.

Paine was inclined to saddle part of the blame for good men gone bad on a fickle and censorious public; goaded by unjust criticism, brave men sometimes turned traitor. Not every man, he said, had the moral backbone to bear the weight of obloquy and ingratitude. He proved to be one who could carry the weight. According to newspaper reports, Paine listened to the music of the Rogue's March "without the least emotion of fear or anger, but calmly observed that such conduct had no tendency to hurt his feelings or injure his fame." His self-confidence, sometimes cocksure, was always a protective armor, impenetrable by the shafts of malice. Industry and congenial companionship were his antidotes for abuse and

calumny; he looked on his work, pronounced it all very good, and let the heathen rage.

John Hall of Bordentown found him jollier than ever, full of schemes for new inventions. Together they tinkered with the bridge model. This Paine offered as a gift to Congress and, anticipating their refusal, asked to have his offer read into the records, that America might be given credit for the innovation in bridge building. It was noticed in Bordentown that as he went about carrying his hat in one hand, the other behind his back, "he was generally absorbed in deep thought, seldom noticed any one unless spoken to, and in going from his home to the tavern was frequently observed to cross the street several times."

However his step wandered or faltered, his mind was steady. His abundantly nourished brain was fertile, his thought fruited, for the soil was not soured by bitterness. Yellow fever was taking toll of life at the ports of entry; he wrote a pamphlet suggesting preventive measures. Replying to a letter of the President, who consulted him on political matters, he wrote: "Would it not be a good measure to prohibit the arrival of all vessels from the West Indies from the last of June till the middle of October? If this was done this session of Congress, and we escaped the fever next summer, we should always know how to escape it."

Paine was now nearing the threescore and ten limit, thirty years of which had been crowded with dangerous adventure; he was ready for more. If his English friends started a revolution, he proposed to go over and help them. "I have a good state of health and a happy mind," he wrote Samuel Adams; "I take care of both by nourish-

ing the first with temperance, and the latter with abundance." In defense of Jeffersonian democracy his interest in politics revived, and his pen was busy. He had become doubtful of the veracity of history, and thought of forming a society to look into the matter. He was alert to take a crack at slavery wherever it raised its head. Slavery, he maintained, was economic stupidity, since revenue is raised on consumption, and a squad of slaves consume less than one white man. "It is always fortunate when the interests of government and that of humanity act unitedly." But "above all, I defend the cause of humanity." When, after the purchase, Louisiana petitioned Congress for the right to import slaves, his anger flamed: "Dare you put up a petition to Heaven for such power, without fearing to be struck from the earth by its justice?" To Jefferson he wrote: "It is chiefly the people of Liverpool that employ themselves in the slave trade. . . . Had I command of the elements I would blast Liverpool with fire and brimstone. It is the Sodom and Gomorrah of brutality."

During his enforced stay in France, Paine had given time and thought to the disturbing problem of American navigation on the Spanish-controlled Mississippi. He vehemently opposed the time-honored Federalist solution—grabbing the territory. Napoleon's financial straits solved the problem peaceably, and the Louisiana Purchase was the subject of much correspondence between Paine and the President. In view of the present situation in Mexico, Paine's reflections have point and humor. The French were unprepared for popular government, and must be educated for it. Start them off, he suggested, with the municipal franchise, but above all, free them



from foreign dictation by allowing them to elect their own spiritual advisers: "I do not make it a compulsive article, but to put it in their power to use it when they please. It will serve to hold the priests in a stile of good behavior, and give the people an idea of elective rights. Anything, they say, will do to learn upon, and therefore they may as well begin with the priests."

To the people of the new territory he addressed a memorial, warning them of the misery brought on the French "by the possession of power before they understood the principles of liberty." John Randolph, he who toasted Washington's damnation, thought well of this paper, and proposed that the government print a thousand copies for distribution in Louisiana.

Paine's last years were spent in the State of New York, where he divided his time between the city and New Rochelle. He received much attention from "aristocratic hoodlums," was baited by piety and patriotism, and excited in the vulgar as much interest as the wild man from Borneo or the bearded lady. A Massachusetts Paine, who had the misfortune to be christened Thomas, petitioned the legislature to rid him of so odious a name, and was legally changed into a respectable Robert Treat Paine.

Grant Thorburn, a "blue-skin" Presbyterian psalm-singer in the Cedar Street Scotch church, relates in *Forty Years' Residence in America* his overweening curiosity to get a peep at the notorious man. Crashing into a room where Paine was talking with friends, he demanded:

" 'Gentlemen, is Mr. Paine in this room?'

" 'My name is Paine.'

" 'Mr. Paine and you gentlemen, will you please excuse my abrupt entry; I came out of mere curiosity to



see the man whose writings have made so much noise in the world.'

"I am very glad your curiosity is so easily satisfied," said Paine.

"Says I, 'Good morning, gentlemen'; and walked out and shut the door."

An extra session of "blue-skin" elders was called to punish this reprehensible curiosity, and Mr. Thorburn was sentenced to forego the pleasure of psalm-singing for some months.

While personal abuse rarely drew his fire, Paine was all ablaze at any attack on his principles. Isaac Hall was refused a meeting-place in Philadelphia, for no other reason than the suspicion of being a disciple of Paine; his alleged master promptly took the matter up with John Innskeep, Mayor of Philadelphia:

"If those whom you may choose to call my disciples follow my example in doing good to mankind, they will pass the confines of this world with a happy mind, while the hope of the hypocrite shall perish. . . . I do not remember the name of Innskeep at Philadelphia in 'the time that tried men's souls.' He must be some mushroom of modern growth that has started up on the soil which the generous services of Thomas Paine contributed to bless with freedom. . . . I know [not] what profession of religion he is of, nor do I care, for if a man is malevolent and unjust, it signifies not to me what . . . sectary he may hypocritically belong to. . . .

"My motive and object in all my political works . . . have been to rescue man from tyranny and false systems and false principles of government, and enable him to be free. . . . My motive and object in all my publica-

tions on religious subjects . . . have been to bring man to the right reason that God has given him; to impress on him the great principles of divine morality, justice and mercy, and a benevolent disposition to all men and all creatures. . . . I am happy in the continual contemplation of what I have done, and I thank God that he gave me talents for the purpose and fortitude to do it. It will make the continual consolation of my departing hours, whenever they shall arrive."

Pending the time of his departure, he had other consolations which he made the most of; he had distinguished friends of varied and vital interests, as devoted as his enemies were savage. He strolled along the Hudson with Robert Fulton, who was about to launch his steamboat, an invention to which Paine had contributed. He was working on the idea, back in the days of the Revolution, when Fulton was a child. Thomas Addis Emmet, later Attorney General of the State of New York, was another friend, with whom he would have much agreeable exchange of sentiment on the tyranny and iniquity of the British government; Emmet was the brother of the executed Irish patriot, and had himself done three years in an English prison without a trial. With the brilliant and eccentric young Englishman, John Wesley Jarvis, painter and sculptor, Paine lived for a time.

Nicholas de Bonneville had sent his wife and children to America, intending to follow them, a plan frustrated by Napoleon's government, and the family was saddled on Paine. His letters to Bonneville and to other friends indicate that this unpremeditated domesticity was a tax on Paine's failing strength and moderate means, but Bonneville had taken him in and lent him money in

Paris, when he could get none from America, and Madame took his assistance for granted. She was a Parisian, with no taste for domesticity or the bucolic life of New Rochelle. "She was an incumbrance to me while she was here," he complained, "for she would not do anything, not even make an apple dumplin for her own children." To the relief of both, Madame secured employment in the city as a French teacher.

Increasing infirmity and the responsibility of three growing boys made Paine irritable, anxious, and even penurious about money matters. Congress might be willing, he suggested to the President, to make some pecuniary recognition of his services in France and his assistance to Monroe. Though he did not say so, it is not unlikely that he felt something was due him for the neglect to reclaim him from an imprisonment which left him crippled, and which undoubtedly shortened his life. "But I wish you to be assured," he wrote, "that whatever event this proposal may take, it will make no alteration in my principles or conduct. I have been a volunteer to the world for thirty years without taking profits from anything I have published in America or Europe. I have relinquished all profits that those publications might come cheap among the people for whom they were intended." Congress ignored his request, and the "unmanly silence" vexed and mortified the old man: "After so many years of service my heart grows cold to America."

The meanness of Paine's living was one of Morris' counts against him; on a fraction of what he gave away, to say nothing of the completed bridge and a considerable sum of money which the English government appropriated, he might have lived in affluence. If the French

government felt it owed him a pension, the American government certainly was under greater obligations to him. In the worst of circumstances, he never failed to scrape together something for whoever or whatever needed help; for himself the barest necessities sufficed.

He was now getting old and crotchety; his health was steadily breaking. However much of talent or fortitude a man may possess, fighting in a minority against the current of the time is wearing. Following his imprisonment he was subject to seizures, attributed by good people to the demon rum. One serious shock occurred while he lived with John Jarvis, who vigorously scotched rumors of his guest's inebriation and disorderly habits. The shock was an interesting and not altogether unpleasant experience; recovering consciousness, he joyfully informed Jarvis: "My corporeal functions have ceased; my intellect is clear; this is a proof of immortality." It was a revivifying experience to a man with so keen a zest for life and with an inextinguishable interest in the progress of the race.

Three weeks later he wrote a friend: "I was struck with a fit of apoplexy that deprived me of all sense and motion. . . . The people supposed me dead. . . . The fit took me on the stairs, . . . and I got so very much hurt by the fall, that I have not been able to get in or out of bed since that day, otherwise than being lifted out in a blanket by two persons; yet all this while my mental faculties have remained as perfect as ever I enjoyed them. I consider the scene I have passed through as an experiment in dying, and I find death has no terrors for me."

Stimulated by the hope of immortality, he exercised



his mental faculties, while confined to his bed, in writing a tirade against the religion "that puts the Creator in an inferior point of view, and places the Christian Devil above him." He earnestly directed the mind of man "immediately to his Creator, and not to fanciful secondary beings called mediators, as if God was superannuated or ferocious."

He was not nearly so dead as the people supposed; within half a year he had recovered sufficiently to put up a stiff fight for his citizenship. Living on his property at New Rochelle, a tribute from the once grateful State of New York, in recognition of his patriotic services in the Revolution, his vote was challenged by the election officials. He appealed to his friend Clinton, formerly Governor of New York, now Vice-President of the United States: "Elisha Ward and three or four other Tories who lived within the British lines in the revolutionary war, got to be inspectors of the election last year at New Rochelle. . . . These men refused my vote at the election, saying to me: 'You are not an American; our minister at Paris, Gouverneur Morris would not reclaim you.'"

With little hope of influencing the anti-revolutionary czars of New Rochelle, Vice-President Clinton wrote a note to Paine's lawyer, when Paine brought suit to establish his citizenship, on the strength of which Monroe had extricated him from a French prison. His personal friends, the President, Vice-President, and Secretary of State, affirmed his citizenship, but in New Rochelle, the bailiwick of Gouverneur Morris, Tom, Dick, or Harry was as influential as the chief magistrates of the nation. The democratic administration was not supported "by



the first characters." Morris wrote Hamilton: "They consider Mr. Jefferson as infected with all the cold-blooded vices." Rather than submit to a democratic administration, Morris entertained the idea of throwing off the "shackles" of the national government, with the aid of British troops, if necessary. As far as New Rochelle was concerned, therefore, the chiefs of the nation might go hang; it was Gouverneur Morris' story that Paine was not a citizen, and the court stuck to it. From being overburdened with citizenships, he now became a man without a country. He was over seventy, and his voting days were nearly over.

Paine occasionally preached in New Rochelle, though it is not recorded that his audiences were large. His affection for children and dogs was long remembered. He had always been the friend of the dumb beast; now he patted every stray cur in the town and got a friendly wag in response. He bestowed cookies and bits of sugar on the youngsters. To the astonishment of boys who descended on his orchard for a raid, the old man came out and picked the biggest and best apples for them.

A newspaper reminiscence in 1847 describes his appearance in his last days: "His figure was rather tall. . . . His small piercing eyes twinkled over a huge nose covered with carbuncles. . . . His sitting room was nearly destitute of furniture—a plain table and a few wooden chairs, a bottle on the mantelpiece with part of a candle in it." Paine always lived in an untidy mess of papers, hardware, and models of his inventions, which probably accounts for the tales of uncleanness. The writer carefully picks his steps over Paine's heresies, and concludes: "A man, who, with all his faults has done more for





DEATH MASK OF THOMAS PAINE

"I have lived an honest and useful life to mankind; my time has been spent in doing good; and I die in perfect composure and resignation to the will of my Creator God." (Courtesy of Wm. M. Van der Weyde, Thomas Paine Memorial Association, New Rochelle, N. Y.)

liberty than any man that ever lived." John Mellish mentions him in his *Travels* as "a very good specimen of acuteness of mind and a turn for wit at the advanced age of seventy."

Paine thought his heart had grown cold to America, but the British Orders in Council warmed it up; his last discoverable letter is a final thrust at the old enemy. "The british Ministry have outschemeed themselves," he wrote Jefferson. "They expected those orders would force all the commerce of the United States to England. . . . Suppose the President were to authorize Mr. Pinckney to propose to the british Ministry that the United States would negotiate with France for rescinding the Milan Decree, on condition the English Ministry would rescind their orders in Council: and in that case the United States would recall their Embargo." As Paine was drifting out of the world, this dispute was steadily drifting toward the War of 1812.

"I have been preserved through many dangers," Paine once wrote Samuel Adams, "but instead of buffeting the Deity with prayers, as if I distrusted him, or must dictate to him, I reposed myself on his protection; and you, my friend, will find, even in your last moments, more consolation in the silence of resignation than in the murmuring wish of a prayer." Though he had never loved Alexander Hamilton, he was disgusted by the sanctimonious drooling over the dead statesman, and favored the clerical orators with a piece of his mind. They "had reduced General Hamilton's character to that of a feeble minded man, who in going out of the world wanted a passport from a priest. . . . The man, sir, who puts his trust and confidence in God, that leads a just and moral

life, and endeavors to do good, does not trouble himself about priests when his hour for departure comes, nor permit priests to trouble themselves about him."

The hour of his own departure having come, he was disquieted by fears of mendacious religiosity. Without permission, the clergy troubled themselves about him. They slipped by his bodyguard to warn him that the terrors of the damned awaited him, unless he repented and avowed a belief in Christ. Ostensibly concerned for his soul, they were too evidently bent on vindicating orthodoxy. The strategy of the irrepressible soul-savers outwitted all the vigilance of friends; the dying man dreaded to be left alone, and angrily repulsed the attempts of intruders to introduce the subject of religion. A friendly clergyman made excuses for his irascibility: "People hectored Paine and made him say things he would never have said to those who treated him like a gentleman."

The Quaker merchant and preacher, Willett Hicks, cousin of the Quaker schismatic, Elias Hicks, visited him constantly in his last illness; and with him he freely discussed his religious views. He desired to be laid among those of his father's faith, the only people who had not dishonored their Creator by cruelty to His creatures. Mr. Hicks was for granting this request, but "even the Quakers" refused to be stigmatized by the execrated name of Paine. His second choice for a burial-place was his own land in New Rochelle.

On June 8, 1809, where 59 Grove Street now stands, in Greenwich Village, New York City, Paine ended his seventy-two and a half years of adventurous life. A French woman, her two boys, two Negroes, and the



Quaker Hicks, followed the hearse to New Rochelle. An inquisitive English traveler stopped the party and learned that Paine was at last out of the range of his mortal foes. The devil, he cheerfully remarked, could now settle a long score with him, for he had done much mischief in the world. The Quaker minister replied that he would take his chances in the next world with Paine, rather than with any other man in New York.

So, unnoticed and unhonored, went to his grave the American patriot, Thomas Paine, who had converted George Washington to faith in American independence.

## Chapter XVIII

### THE UNQUIET GRAVE

It was a time when, in religion there was as yet no middle philosophical ground; people were very strong on one side or the other; there was a good deal of lying, and the liars were well paid for their work. Paine and his principles made the great issue. Paine was double-damnably lied about. . . . He was neither drunken nor filthy . . . a high-minded gentleman. . . . Paine left a clear-cut impression on the public mind . . . was among the best and truest of men.—WALT WHITMAN.

Men have enough religion to hate, but not enough to love.—SWIFT.

DEATH had at last relieved Thomas Paine of the strenuous task of twisting a crooked world into better shape. He gave up without the least anxiety for the world's future or his own; he had done his very best; he was sure those who followed would do better. He faced the unknown with a serenity undisturbed by speculations on the things which are hidden: "I hold it to be presumption in man to make an article of faith as to what the Creator will do with him hereafter." He took a malicious jab at the presumptuous religious know-it-alls: "There is a description of men . . . who are so very insignificant, both in character and conduct, as not to be worth the trouble of saving or damning, or of raising from the dead. My own opinion is, that those whose lives have been spent in doing good, and endeavoring to make their fellow mortals happy, for this is the only way in which we can serve God, will be happy hereafter."

Having followed this course according to his light, he was unafraid of the power that had created him with a consuming passion for justice and mercy.

He had never gone out of his way to shun death, and his experimental trip into the Valley of the Shadow convinced him that it was not as dark as it was painted. Only the dread of his aberrant fellow mortals disturbed his last hours. He was haunted by the memory of the accounts of his death and recantation, published in English papers while he was in Paris; the unscrupulous imagination of aggressive orthodoxy would, he feared, stop at nothing in the effort to destroy his heresies. He begged his friends to note the clarity of his mind and the fixity of his faith, and to maintain his constancy against a lying world.

He re-wrote his will, affirming his unchanging monotheistic faith: "The last will and testament of me the subscriber, Thomas Paine, reposing confidence in my Creator God, and in no other being, for I know no other, and I believe in no other." He remembered his friends the Bonneville, Rickman, and the widow of the heretical Elihu Palmer, all of whom had fought the good fight with him. The bulk of his property was left to Madame Bonneville in trust for her children, "that she may bring them well up, give them good and useful learning, and instruct them in their duty to God, and the practice of morality." She was also made his literary executor—unfortunately, for the good lady returned to the bosom of the Catholic church, which was severe on heresies. A Catholic priest "borrowed" some of Paine's manuscript and never returned it.

Calumny might rob him of honor, but nothing ever

robbed Paine of his pride in the part he had played in the winning of American independence; he put it in his last testament that he was "author of the work entitled *Common Sense* . . . which awaked America to a Declaration of Independence." Then without malice or reproach he bade farewell to a world in which he had acquitted himself as a man, notwithstanding much shabby treatment. He had ever been grateful to "nature and Providence for putting it in my power to be of some use to mankind," and had neither complaints nor regrets. "I herewith take my final leave of [my friends] and of the world. I have lived an honest and useful life to mankind; my time has been spent in doing good; and I die in perfect composure and resignation to the will of my Creator God." A man of great faith, as we now reckon, yet the hounds of dogmatism were soon yelping down the trail of his memory. Willett Hicks, the Quaker minister, publicly stated that he had serious conversation with Paine before his death, "and he said his sentiments respecting the Christian religion were now precisely the same as they were when he wrote *The Age of Reason*." In the face of a tornado, Mr. Hicks was wasting his breath.

Paine in his suffering often moaned: "O Lord! O Lord!"—which in the repetitions of the godly soon became, "Lord Jesus, save me." It pleased them to believe that he cried for salvation, yet was damned. Children "were taught to lisp his name in connection with blasphemy," and societies for the promotion of Christian knowledge rose to a great opportunity. A London penny tract pictured the awful deathbed scene, a paramour weeping as she listens to the recanting infidel. She had lost all, including honor, "and now he tells me

the principles he has taught me will not bear me out." Scoffers were invited to tremble: "Reader . . . contemplate the deathbed of this champion of infidelity, if you can without horror. . . . Hear his awful declaration: 'If ever the Devil had an agent on earth I have been one.' Such was the awful case of Paine. Do you wish it to be yours also?"

The weeping Magdalene, who pointed the moral and adorned the lurid tale, was created out of whole cloth by Cheetham, an Englishman who edited the *Citizen*—by all accounts venal, incapable of running straight with any party. The Tammany Society had ousted him for slipperiness, and outraged citizens had swamped him with libel suits. Underhand stabs at Jefferson brought him into violent collision with Paine. He was the type of man to climb into favor on a dead man's reputation. He had good reasons for getting out of the country; defamers of Paine, he knew, acquired merit with the British government, and sometimes a substantial reward. He had a *Life of Paine* ready to publish so soon as his death should be announced.

A contemporary, Southwick, editor of *The Christian Visitor*, declared: "Cheetham's libelous history was intended as a peace offering to the British government. Those who knew Cheetham declared he meant his book 'as a passport to British Treasury favor.'" The fulsome flattery of the English government, coming from a professed republican radical, justifies the suspicion that Mr. Cheetham was hoping to sell a dead man's good name for a price. His *Life* is too raw to be taken seriously, but it has been the source of thousands of attacks on the "infidel": Mr. Cheetham was writing for a believing world.



The spicy scandal which gave piquancy to an otherwise dull and spiteful narrative was based solely on a letter written by an illiterate farrier, Carver, a racy son of the soil, in a fit of fury and a burst of Billingsgate, following a dispute about a bill. Carver, in a torrent of unrestrained abuse, ventured to suggest that Paine's relations had been irregular with the lady whose husband had placed her in his care, and who was almost young enough to be his granddaughter. "I know," he foamed, "it is the custom in England that when a gentleman keeps a lady, that he pays her board and lodgings." Unless he got satisfaction, he delicately insinuated, his letter might be made public. Paine promptly put a snuffer on Carver's crude blackmailing scheme, but Cheetham secured a copy of this letter and used it, so Carver claimed, without consent of the writer. From it he worked up a good story of a wronged husband, an erring wife, and a treacherous friend. He had served a long apprenticeship at newspaper scurrility.

Madame Bonneville was deficient in a knowledge of English, but without the aid of an interpreter she got the purport of "paramour"; Mr. Cheetham was summoned to meet her in court. "Ladies of the first distinction," mothers of her pupils, "appeared in court and attested to the unblemished character of this much abused female." Paine's friends also appeared, Thomas Addis Emmet, Robert Fulton, and John Wesley Jarvis. Confronted by this distinguished cloud of witnesses, Cheetham fell back on Carver's letter; Carver fell back on his fit of ungovernable rage and wriggled out from under, admitting he had no grounds for his accusation. Even through orthodox spectacles the jury could see no case

for Mr. Cheetham; they found him guilty and ordered the scandalous libel expunged from his book. Judge Hoffman, however, would not deal harshly with one who had "served the cause of religion" by defaming an infidel; the defendant "should be favored as a man who had written a book against the prince of Deists, and for the Holy Gospel," he said, and accordingly favored him with a nominal fine. Paine had no claim to posthumous civility, in the opinion of Leslie Stephen, nor to posthumous justice, in the opinion of Judge Hoffman. Cheetham's book may be found in reference libraries, garnished with asterisks which indicate the expunged references to Madame Bonneville; but so far as Paine is concerned, the libel stands. The letter which Carver repudiated, calling Cheetham "an abominable liar," was retained in deleted form, with its suggestive reflections on the customs of English gentlemen with regard to kept ladies.

The vultures swooped down to pick the bones of the dead lion. Thorburn, the unctuous psalm-singer, in his zeal for righteousness, revived and amplified the exploded Cheetham scandal. Sexual laxity, one of the few crimes with which Paine had not been charged in his lifetime, now became a prominent feature of the abuse. As the story grew sallow with age it was rouged up a bit, and the paramour became "one of the women he kept in Paris." An English biographical dictionary advertised a sketch of Paine, abridged from Cheetham's *Life*, "with additional instances of his abominable life and disgusting manners." An English publication, *Biographies of Great Americans*, was emasculated by the American publisher; the highly favorable sketch of Paine

would hurt the sale of the book. Thirty-five years after his death a Catholic bishop published in the *Catholic Magazine* what purported to be a story of the awful deathbed scene by an eyewitness. Like a rolling snowball, the Paine legend gathered volume.

Paine's trouble-making career did not end with death; his seditious soul went marching on with his resurrected bones. Out from the front rank of defamers stepped a bold champion to honor his name and to defend his faith. William Cobbett was a boisterous Englishman, with an acute, untrammelled, robust, and untrained mind, which he delivered with vigor and vituperation, and changed over night, with apologies to none. A man of extraordinary virility, of monumental nerve and impudence, "he excelled his whole generation in ferocity of invective," and that generation was neither mealy-mouthed nor gumshod. There was a Napoleonic quality in the man's insolence and courage.

Cobbett had been petted by the British government as a violent Tory, and kindly entreated by the same party in America, where for a time he edited a pro-English Tory sheet, all without any evidence of venality or time-serving. His courage was equal to his convictions, which were very strong. During the heat of the Anglo-French disturbances, he rented a shop, adorned the windows with the features of George III., Lord North, and those generals and nobles who were most decidedly *persona non grata* to Americans, indicating at the same time his contempt for Frenchward-leaning statesmen. His window-dressing completed to his satisfaction, "I took down the shutters and waited." He waited in vain; to his disappointment, nothing happened.

Peter Porcupine was the name hurled in derision at this incarnation of pugnacity; he picked it up and used it as a pen-name. Paine referred to him as "the man who calls himself Peter Skunk or Peter Porcupine, or some such name," for the anti-English, pro-republican Paine was the object of his most odorous spirits. "How Tom Paine gets a living now, or what brothel he inhabits I know not. . . . Like Judas he will be remembered by posterity; men will learn to express all that is base, malignant, treacherous, unnatural and blasphemous by the single monosyllable—Paine." Cobbett published a will, suitably remembering such reprobates as Jefferson and Monroe, and bequeathed to Paine "a strong hempen collar . . . as best adapted to render his death in some measure as infamous as his life, that the national razor [the guillotine] may not be disgraced by the head of such a monster." As he never did anything by halves, he furnished the obituary:

He is crammed in a dungeon and preaches up reason,  
Blasphemes the almighty, lives in filth like a hog,  
Is abandoned in death and interred like a dog.

There were giants of invective in those days.

Suddenly, like Saul of Tarsus, Cobbett was converted from a persecutor to a disciple; the crucified Paine became the savior of the world, himself the apostle of the redeeming gospel. Paine's *Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance* wrought this miracle of conversion. The new apostle blandly announced to the world: "Old age having laid its hand on this truly great man, this truly philosophical politician, at his expiring



*flambeau* I lighted my taper." And he did not hide the light under a bushel.

Cobbett was notorious for his "incessant scurrility of Americans"; America was not worthy to be the resting-place of his great master; he vowed to move him to one more suitable. Mr. Cobbett was a man of action; he made a midnight sortie into the wilds of New Rochelle, dug up the coffin, "brought it off to New York; and just as we found it, it goes to England. Let it be considered the act of the reformers of England, Scotland and Ireland. In their name we opened the grave, and in their name will the tomb be raised." He thought it unnecessary to consult the reformers mentioned, and imprudent to consult anybody else before undertaking his grave-digging exploit. Paine's resurrection, after ten years of the quiet of the grave, was the sign and symbol of trouble for the unreformed English; for a quarter of a century after his conversion, Cobbett heckled the government with a relentlessness worthy of his patron saint.

He created more than his usual stir when he arrived in Liverpool. The *Liverpool Journal* reported the excitement, and quoted Cobbett as saying: "Great indeed must that man have been whose very bones attract such attention." They attracted the attention of a town crier, who heralded the news on his rounds, which attracted the attention of the authorities, and they put the misguided man in jail.

Cobbett was not to be squelched by the official frown of a government which his lighted taper revealed as "bigoted and tyrannical." He planned a spectacular funeral, "worthy of the remains that are to be buried," to occur at a season of the year "when twenty wagon loads



of flowers can be brought to strew before the hearse."

Government, however, was strewing the path of zealous reformers, not with roses, but with thorns, and Cobbett never achieved the splendid funeral he planned. At his death the mortal remains of Paine passed to his son and executor, who was arrested for debt. The avaricious receiver insisted on putting them up at auction, with other effects of the debtor, but could not overcome the scruples of the auctioneer. He retained possession of them till he too was overtaken by bankruptcy, when he passed them on to a Mr. Tilley. Their final disposition remains a mystery to this day; it is rumored that the skull surmounts the bookshelf of a Church of England clergyman.

Paine might have approved of the post-mortem journey of his bones, provided his principles went with them to harry the government, and they did. Those who imagined that the strife was o'er, the victory won, were deceived. Lo! from the tomb a doleful sound smote their ears. As Cobbett arrived in England to bury his bones and to pry into the dark, dank corners of the social system with the taper lighted at Paine's dying flambeau, the old-guard conservatives were making a last fight to bury Paine's ideas beyond the possibility of resurrection. The Catholic Society, the Society of the Suppression of Vice, and other worthy and uplifting organizations, banded together and imagined a vain thing. Richard Carlile, who had gathered fagots in his youth to burn in effigy the author of *The Rights of Man*, was now bent on publishing Paine's works, come hell or high water. Solicitous moralists brought him before the judgment seat for publishing "a blasphemous libel," *The Age of Reason*. He was fined to the limit of the law and imprisoned. Jane,

his wife, a stout rebel, jumped into the breach and carried on the business till she too went the way of her husband. Then Mary Anne Carlile seized the colors; apparently there were no quitters in the Carlile clan. Mary Anne's counsel quoted in his plea the free-speech plank of the Virginia Legislature—that it is time enough for the civil government to interfere when principles break out in overt acts, truth has nothing to fear from conflict, and errors cease to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them. Justice Best was not impressed by the wisdom of the Virginia legislators. Steadily, however, principles obnoxious to government were gaining ground, especially as they were aired by prosecutions. Though the jury was packed in the good old way, four jurors were reported by the foreman as “obstinate.” One of them spoke up: “I throw back the charge of obstinacy in the teeth of the foreman.” There was no agreement, therefore no verdict. “Loudly and rapturously” the obstinate four were cheered by an anxious waiting crowd.

A group of “prosperous gentlemen” had already leased a house to carry on the offensive publications without fear of being dislodged by an intimidated landlord. At last the government read the handwriting on the wall and felt the grip of a ghostly hand. English radicals were willing to pay the high price for a free press, and they got it. Mary Anne Carlile had carried the colors to victory.

In the torments of hell to which the orthodox so hopelessly consigned him, it would have alleviated Paine's sufferings to know the great changes which were taking place in the “opinions of men.” Half a century after his death an uncompromising Englishman of his own

stripe, facing an ugly pro-slavery mob in Liverpool, the city he longed to destroy, was urged by his friends to say something soothing. At his own risk, by the sheer audacity of his courage, he quelled the murderous rioters. As they quieted down to listen to his soothing words, he slowly enunciated: "Every brick in your damned city is cemented with the blood of a slave. That is all the apology you will get from me." Liverpool did not share the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, but across the water slavery was "blasted with fire and brimstone" by a man who had come into the world just as Paine was leaving it. Abraham Lincoln, who "rose on the democratic floor," was an avid reader of Thomas Paine. With an obstinacy equal to that of his favorite author, he established two principles which Paine had preached with tireless fanaticism: emancipation and an indissoluble union—"the UNION," Paine wrote in capitals, "*which God preserve.*"

Paine would have had fewer enemies if he had had fewer ideas. Many who could have tolerated his religious heresies were enraged by his political radicalism; many who approved his politics were horrified by his religion. Between the upper and nether millstones of religion and politics, the two subjects he had tabooed in his early editorial days, his reputation was ground to dust. Unwarranted and malevolent attacks have driven his biographers to the defensive; yet a thorough search reveals little to defend in his innocently strenuous life. He lived in a litter of papers and hardware for his inventions; drank too much brandy during the French Terror; used great quantities of snuff in old age; was vain of his success and loved to talk about it; was self-confident and a nuisance to standpatters: simmered down, these are the

charges. He was the greatest, most public-spirited pamphleteer of all time, had high aims, unalterable purpose, rare courage, and an inextinguishable love for his kind.

He was a political agitator by accident and an evangelist by vocation; the gospel he preached was the dignity of man and his infinite perfectibility. "Who art thou, vain dust and ashes," he fumed, "whether a king, a bishop, a church or a state . . . that obtrudest thine own insignificance between the soul of man and his maker. Mind thine own concerns." He suffered to see even a dog cringe, and hated political, social, or ecclesiastic systems which disciplined men to dependence and subordination. He lived in independent poverty by his own choice, but hated a poverty that made men servile. He was a mixture of mysticism and hardheaded shrewdness; absorbed in the work to be done in the immediate present, he brushed aside the past too intolerantly, looking toward the future; he took the impenetrable future on faith, refusing to be bothered by speculations about life hereafter.

He scoffed at verbal revelations; yet, like John at Patmos, he was a man of great visions, inspired by the majestic order of the universe. Lifted up in the spirit, he saw a universal brotherhood of men building a holy city on justice and philanthropy, wherein all should be priests and kings, and none should enslave his fellows.

Paine was never idle; he perfected useful inventions; he was the staunchest of fighters on the side of every good cause in his time, and the relentless enemy of every wrong, and could truthfully say on his deathbed: "I have lived a useful life to mankind."

He kept any company that was going his way, making no distinction of low or high; the ironworker who built



THOMAS PAINE  
Author of common Sense  
Died June 8<sup>th</sup> 1809.  
Aged 74 Years.

THE VIOLATED GRAVE

Walt Whitman said that in an age of well-paid liars Paine was double-damnably lied about. Even his tombstone lied about him, for he died at the age of seventy-two years and five months. But Peter Porcupine's bristles stirred at the thought of leaving the champion of liberty in a land utterly incapable of appreciating his worth. Ten years after Paine's death he stole into New Rochelle in the night, dug up the coffin, and carried it off to England.





his bridge was to him no less than a man, the King of France or of England was no more. He was on terms of intimacy with the most distinguished men in the world, many of whom paid the highest tributes to his character and achievements. He acquired such knowledge as he desired, and his success in putting it to good use is an argument for individual freedom in education.

Paine was a fanatic, say some, which is true, though not in a sinister sense; he usually kept his feet on solid realities. And notwithstanding all the harsh words thrown at them by indolent, comfortable respectability, it is fanatics who have sounded the fire alarm to rouse a drowsy world. The criterion for judgment is whether or not they sounded a false alarm.

He was too cocksure, say others. All crusaders have been cocksure; in that career, he who hesitates in doubt is lost. Paine was sometimes wrong, but more often right. His preoccupation with new ideas made him too impatient of the past with its accumulation of traditional rubbish; the rubbish which cluttered up the minds of men. He was a ruthless destroyer, but he provided useful mental furniture to replace the rubbish.

Those who disliked him were annoyed by his vanity, while his closest friends insisted that he was a man of great humility; he was a jumble of both traits. His childlike vanity in his achievements was blurted out without reticence or shame; on the whole it was innocent and impersonal, and no man was more generous in his recognition of the achievements of others. In the last few years of his life, when he was old and sick and harried, it was said that he was penurious. He might have had a fortune, but he gave away like a drunken sailor; in

his extravagant generosity he kept for himself little more than a bare subsistence.

Paine's fate is ironical. He could heartily subscribe to the doctrine of the Calvinist catechism that "the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." But he would not define his idea of God, nor take much interest in any part of the forever but the now. Therefore the Calvinists called him every evil name they could lay their tongues to.

Raised in the traditions of Friends, he had the Quaker's serene indifference to ridicule or abuse. He was in his time the greatest exponent of the principles of the Quaker revolt against tradition; individual freedom, equality, universal peace and brotherhood, and obedience to the still, small voice of an unstifled conscience. Some regard him as the father of the Hicksite Quaker movement; yet the Quakers refused him a grave. He wrote *The Age of Reason* to stem the tide toward atheism; and it is the atheists who have kept his memory green, while sectarians of all denominations have united to blacken it. To cap the climax of irony, he was the first out-in-the-open uncompromising American patriot, and America erased his name from her roll of honor.

Paine was eager to change systems which he believed to be false and degrading, but his chief concern was to change "the opinions of men." In spite of the general ignorance of his important and constructive work in invention, politics, and social reform, resulting from a conspiracy of silence, his books have had a steady sale for a century and a half, and are still going strong. When his venerable friend, the philanthropic Judge Hertell, proposed to erect a monument to him, Andrew Jack-

son said: "Thomas Paine needs no monument made by hands; he has erected a monument in the hearts of all lovers of liberty. *The Rights of Man* will be more enduring than all the piles of marble and granite that man can erect."

Not far from Paine's old haunts, in Vesey Street, New York, through which commuters hustle for their evening trains, stands a ramshackle building; a dark stairway leads to a garret door which tinkles a bell as it opens. All have left but a printer, who discourses volubly on the greatness of Paine. The Bible, this admirer tells you, has a larger circulation than any other book, but Paine is more widely read. This upper-floor press turns out from two to five thousand copies a year of the book for selling which men once went to Botany Bay.

"An army of principles," said Paine, "will penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot—It will succeed where diplomatic management would fail. . . . It will march on the horizon of the world, and it will conquer."





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